MAGISTER MORITUR

OUR LORD'S LAST HOURS

JOSEPH HAMMOND

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MAGISTER MORITUR

A CONTEMPLATION OF OUR LORD'S LAST HOURS

BY

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LIST OF

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

MEDITATION		PAGE
I.	THE GARDEN	3
II.	THE AGONY	21
III.	THE BETRAYAL	49
IV.	THE ARREST	63
V.	THE ARRAIGNMENT BEFORE ANNAS	81
VI.	THE TRIAL BEFORE CAIAPHAS	105
VII.	THE ARRAIGNMENTS BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD	129
VIII.	THE CONDEMNATION	155
IX.	THE CRUCIFIXION	181
	1. THE FIRST WORD	197
	2. THE SECOND WORD	209
	3. THE THIRD WORD	220
	4. THE FOURTH WORD	231
	5. THE FIFTH WORD	239
	6. THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH WORDS	245
	7. THE MEANING AND THE LESSONS OF THE CROSS	255

MEDITATION I

THE GARDEN

"EIKON BASILIKÉ—A Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings"—that is the title of a book which appeared in the year 1649, and which made a profound impression on the country in those dark and troublous days. It made a deep impression because it not only appeared soon after the execution of King Charles the First, but it was also generally believed to have been written by that unfortunate monarch—it was really the work of Dr. John Gauden, Bishop of Exeter. We are not concerned, however, with the authorship or even with the contents, and I have only referred to it because of its *Title*—that, or the sub-title, exactly expresses what I shall aim at in these meditations: I shall try to paint for you the Portrait of our SAVIOUR-KING in His solitudes and His sufferings: I shall hope, that is to say, to reproduce for you, mainly from the records of the Evangelists, the lineaments of this most Blessed and Perfect Person, the King of Love and the Prince

of Life, in His agonies and miseries, in His condemnation and crucifixion. "The King's *Mirror*"—that is what I hope these contemplations will prove to be; they will, if I can achieve my purpose, set before you, in all its essentials, the *history* of the Passion, and they will also exhibit, as far as I have grasped them, the *lessons* of those dread, but most fruitful and incomparable hours. But, brothers and sisters of the religion, let us take good heed how we hear: how we gaze on this scarred and stricken form. If we would draw near and see this great sight, we must put off our shoes from our feet: the place where we stand is hallowed ground. It is mentioned as an aggravation of our LORD'S sufferings that they stood "staring and looking upon" Him; we mock at His sorrows if we watch them unmoved or with an idle curiosity; we are to "look unto Him" that we may be saved; that we may learn from Him and learn to love and worship Him. The painter-monk of Florence, Fra Angelico, used to draw the blessed saints meekly kneeling on his knees. It is in a like spirit of devotion, of adoration, that I would fain pourtray His Most Sacred Majesty the "King of saints"; it is in a like spirit that those whom He has redeemed should contemplate His cross and passion. These things are "hid from the wise and prudent, and are revealed unto

babes." Let us, like the three disciples at the Transfiguration, "fear" as we enter into the cloud—the cloud which in those hours of shame and suffering overshadowed and infolded the Eternal Son of GOD.

And another thing must be said here before we begin this contemplation of the LORD in His death: I must remind you of the singular prominence of the Passion-story in the sacred page; you can see the place which it occupied in the minds of the Evangelists from the space which they assign to it in their memoirs. Of the sixteen chapters of St. Mark, five, or one-third of the treatise, are devoted to the history of the last week, and the proportion is much the same in the other synoptists, whilst in St. John's account seven chapters out of twenty-one are reserved for the *last hours* of the Holy and Beautiful Life: that closing scene, from the Supper to the sepulchre, engrosses one-third of his Gospel. No more need, I think, be said to show how solemn, in their estimation, and how gracious and how blessed was that time.

1. The import of the Passion in the Gospel

Now the Jewish day, and, therefore, *His* last day, began, as you know, at sun-down; it practically started with the Holy Supper. But it will be necessary for me, for reasons with which I need not trouble you, to begin my narrative at a later hour, at the

close of that sacred meal; we will humbly join our LORD and the eleven as they issue from the *coenaculum* or upper room. That room, we have good reason to believe, was on the Mount Zion, perhaps at the very spot which is shown as the Supper-chamber at this day. It is not often that we can trust to tradition, where the "holy places" are concerned; we do not know for certain where our REDEEMER was crucified or where He was buried; perhaps we were not intended to know; an ardent curiosity about sites and similar particulars may divert our minds from Christianity, which is the following of CHRIST. But the tradition in this case is peculiarly strong and continuous,[1] and I think we may accept it, and if so, we can trace the course of the sorrowful band on their way to Gethsemane, always remembering that the Jerusalem of to-day is a very different place from the city of our LORD'S day; seventeen sieges have left their mark upon it and raised a vast heap of rubbish on its ancient streets. They set out, I imagine, between nine and ten o'clock—we know that "it was night" when Judas left them,[2] but the exact hour matters very

[1] See Sanday, *Sacred Sites*, pp. 77–87. "Of all the most sacred sites, it is the one that has the strongest evidence in its favour."

[2] The Rabbinic rule was that the Great *Hallel* must be sung before midnight.

little. I suspect that when they left the house,[1] until they were free of the city, they would all "keep still silence," for they would not want to attract attention; this night our King must be alone, alone with the powers of darkness, and He was such a public character that, had He been recognized, it is probable that He would have been followed. I suspect, therefore, that they stole silently out of the house and passed noiselessly along the mean and unclean streets—the narrow lanes, rather—of the city, until they found themselves outside the gates: those gates, shut at other times by night, stood open during the Feast. These Eastern lanes are so narrow and so dark, even when the Paschal moon is shining overhead, as it was at that moment, that they would easily escape observation. And that, although "from every house shone the festive lamp and everywhere there was bustle for going up to the temple, the gates of which were thrown open at midnight[2];" they would be less observed, perhaps, than when they were in the open, for the Holy City was crowded out at Passover-time, and many of the pilgrims, who may, with the residents, have numbered two or even three millions, had to spend the night on the slopes of

[1] Possibly the house of Mary, the mother of Mark.

[2] Edersheim.

Olivet or in the valleys round about Jerusalem. And it may well be that, in order to avoid notice, He walked apart and in advance of the rest—St. Luke says that His disciples "*followed* Him"; some, perhaps, near, some at a distance. All the same, He found opportunity to say something to those eleven men—there were but eleven; *He* would remember, if *they* did not, that distressful gap in the twelve caused by the defection of Judas; He would remember, too, what Judas had gone forth to do—the eleven men who marched sadly at his side. It is just possible, indeed, that the long discourse contained in the 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of St. John was spoken—spoken *in substance;* no one could possibly remember the exact words—in the open air; you will have observed that it follows straight upon the words, "Arise, let us go hence,"[1] but of that we cannot be certain; it is, however, probable that the warning, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night," etc., was given as they descended into the valley; the Kidron lay one hundred feet below them, half-a-mile from the city walls.[2] Both St. Mark and St. Matthew place these words *after* the going forth to the mount of Olives. And see what that warning means! This is the first lineament of

[1] St. John xiv. 31. [2] Farrar.

our LORD which the Passion discloses to us. He is thinking not of His sorrows, but of the safety of His disciples. The same blessed *trait* of altruism, of unselfishness, comes before us again and again; He thinks of others: He forgets Himself. He knows what a shock to their faith His apprehension and crucifixion will be, and so He applies Himself to prepare them for it. That is why, for one thing, He reminds them of the ancient prophecy, "I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad"—that will show them that all this tragedy was planned of GOD. Then He tells them that He is to be raised up and He will meet them again in Galilee. He has spoken on the subject already, has warned them that Satan will sift them as wheat. Now He recurs to it again. "Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them to the end," and so He labours to deliver them. He has prayed for them that they may be kept from falling; now He speaks plainly of the fierce ordeal that awaits them all, and especially Simon Peter. And so they come, their hearts burdened and saddened by these and other like words, for although they did not know of the coming crucifixion, though He had recently foretold it,[1] they must have

[1] St. Matthew xx. 19.

known that some disaster impended, they must have felt, like Elisha, that their Master would be taken from their head that day[1]—they come to the bed, the watercourse of the Kidron—a rushing torrent it is in the rainy season, but at Passover time it may have been dry; they cross it—there is a bridge there now, but it is doubtful whether there was one then: the word "bridge" is nowhere found in the Bible; they cross it and *He* crosses His Rubicon; He enters the valley of the shadow of death. They are now near the foot of Olivet, and a high road then, as now, wound round its base; it is the road along which He had come on Palm Sunday. It is here, just beyond the bridge, that tradition places the Garden of Gethsemane, but here tradition is certainly at fault; our LORD could not have found the secrecy, the quiet, which He craved in so public a spot, so close to the city and to the highway; indeed, three paths diverged from this point. It is probable that the garden lay comparatively near to the river-bed,[2] but up a little glade to the left; the main road which I spoke of turns to the right. However, the precise spot matters

[1] Even Keim contends (p. 8) that "these modest and gloomy anticipations could not have been afterwards invented by the apostles."

[2] Cf. St. John xviii. 1.

little; we make much of such details, when all the time we ought to be concerned with duties, with principles. What if we cannot fix the site of Gethsemane: we can still learn its lessons just the same. And I seem to find one lesson in the circumstance that the Agony took place in a garden.[1] First, let me say that this "garden" was an inclosed place—that is the idea of the word: it was fenced off by wall or cactus hedge, and so, presumably, was private property. But, if it was private property, how came our SAVIOUR to have the *entrée* of it, for we are told that He "ofttimes resorted thither with His disciples"? I believe the answer to be that it belonged to a disciple, as I suspect the "upper room" also did; it has been held, though on extremely slender grounds, that it was the property of the Blessed Virgin, inherited from her parents. It was not a garden in our sense of the word; it was rather an orchard; a place of trees, not of flowers. But whatever it was, there is a certain Divine fitness in the choice of a garden for His great conflict—and we may remember that His tomb, too, was in a

[1] "The people of Jerusalem chose for their gardens and country seats the Mount of Olives"—Keim, p. 11. Tradition places the Agony in a cave, but, according to tradition, so many events happened in caves!

garden—not only because "GOD the first garden made, And the first city Cain," but because it was in a garden that the first Adam fell: there he was overcome by the powers of evil. And now the second Adam, also in a garden, overcomes the evil one and retrieves the fall. You know the lines which embody this lesson—

> "In a garden man became
> Heir of sin and death and shame:
> JESUS in a garden wins
> Life, and pardon for our sins,
> Through His hour of agony
> Praying in Gethsemane."

And this garden has a significant name—"Gethsemane" means the "oil-press," from which we gather that the trees therein were mainly olive-trees, and that there was a press on the spot for crushing the berries and extracting the oil. And may we not, without being fanciful, remember how the CHRIST of GOD was crushed and broken there, both in body and soul, and thereby made our light and life and peace and blessing? I have read somewhere that olive oil in the East serves some sixty different purposes: it gives them their light, for example—they use it in their lamps; it is a food—they use it instead of butter. Yes, but all those many uses result

from the crushing; that must come first. And is not this a law of the heavenly kingdom: *Via crucis, via lucis*—the way to light is the way of the cross; it is through suffering that we are made perfect, as our Master was? "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." You will have noticed the words so often found on the old tombs, *Mors janua vitae:* "Death is the gate of life"; that is true in more senses than one; it is true in *this* sense that

> "Men may rise on stepping-stones
> Of their dead selves to higher things."

And on this subject there is a suggestion for us contained in that word "tribulation." It really means "the process of thrashing"—*tribulum* was the name given to the thrashing-sledge, which separated the chaff from the wheat; now we know why it is that "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of GOD." But let us not make a mistake here: His tribulation was for *our* purification, not His: He was wounded and crushed for our transgressions; He was bruised and broken for our iniquities; the olive-press was that *we* might "partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree."

But they have now reached the gate of the garden:

it must have had a gate or the inclosure would be useless. And here He has another admonition for them, these perturbed and anxious men: you see how concerned He is for their safety. "Pray," He says, "that ye enter not into temptation." Again, in His great love for them, He would put them on their guard. He has already taught them to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." You will find Him presently praying much "the same words" Himself. They, too, are to pray the old prayer—they need nothing new—only it has a special meaning and fitness under their present circumstances, for such a temptation as this they have never had before: this was a temptation that was *not* "common to man": they are to pray that they may not fall under it. The cup may not pass from them any more than from Him, for temptation is one law of our being: we cannot escape it, but by grace we may overcome it. That is what this warning means.

And now, see what He does! Like Jacob, He divides His flock into two bands. Eight of the apostles He leaves at the gate: He does not need their attendance; it was better that they should not witness "the anguish of His soul." So He says to them, much as Abraham had said to his young men, "Sit ye here whilst I go and pray yonder." Do you

observe? They are to *sit* at their ease, whilst He lies prostrate on the ground, in utter misery and dereliction; they may stretch themselves on the grass, or recline on the bank whilst He treads the wine-press alone. It is all of a piece with His beautiful life: He came "not to be ministered unto but to minister"; He purchases our comfort at the cost of His pain; why, the King is clothed from head to foot in self-renunciation. I have heard of a poor clergyman who said, "I travel third-class that my wife may travel first." Something like this, but of course immeasurably higher than this, did your REDEEMER here: He suffers whilst His disciples sit in comfort. And having thus provided for the eight, He takes the other three into the garden with Him. Two points are to be considered here. First, why did our LORD have any one with Him then? Secondly, why did He have these three—Peter and James and John? And to the first question there are two answers. He took the three disciples, in the first place, as witnesses: He also took them for the sake of their companionship. I said just now that there was no need for all the twelve to see the agony of His soul. No, but there *was* reason why some of them should witness it: otherwise who was to tell us about it? So it was partly for our sakes that He took the three along

with Him. But there was another reason: He wanted to have living and loving souls near to Him in that time of horror and thick darkness. He was human, this CHRIST of ours, and in His humanity He was (I say it reverently) almost, if not altogether, afraid to be alone: He shrank from utter solitude; He craved the comfort of knowing that there were some who would "watch" whilst He was in the furnace; some who would be near at hand, even if they could not help. And the second question, "Why *these* three?" also admits of more answers than one. In the first place, they were the *first three*, for as among David's heroes, so amongst CHRIST'S apostles, there was a "first three." These were the three to whom He had given special and significant names, and you will find them prominent and preferred in the Gospel story: we should have been surprised had they not been chosen. But another and a stronger reason may be given for this selection: these three had been partly prepared for this ordeal. They, and they alone, had seen our SAVIOUR'S glory on the mount of Transfiguration; they, and they alone, had witnessed His power in the chamber of death, when He recalled the daughter of Jairus to life. So they had had a training which the others had not had; the Agony would not be the surprise, the shock, the stumbling-

block to them which it would have been to the rest: their faith had been fed and nurtured for this occasion. You may picture them to yourselves, following their Master into the inclosure and disappearing with Him among the trees. Of course they were troubled and frightened, and most of all by the words which He had spoken, and they wondered, no doubt, what was coming next. And how their fear, their awe would be heightened, as they marked the change which came over Him: He "began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled."[1] Observe the word "began"; it may be a Hebrew idiom, but we remember that His sorrow only ended with His death. And, moreover, He had never been like this before. And who shall sound the depth of those words, "greatly amazed," as if some unexpected horror revealed itself before Him; as if He had never counted on anything so dreadful as this which now confronts Him? And "sore troubled." Yes, because "the horrors which lay before Him prostrated Him with sheer terror"[2]: He would not have been human had it been otherwise—and among them was this, that "His life of service should be ended by an unparalleled crime on the part of GOD'S people."[3] Never was sorrow like

[1] St. Mark xiv. 33. [2] Weiss, iii. p. 320.
[3] *Ibid.*

unto His sorrow, and He straightway speaks of it. "My soul," He cries, is exceeding sorrowful[1] even unto death." We must not miss the import of these last words: He means that it was a sorrow sufficient to cause death; it may well be that He would have died there and then but for superhuman support. Nor must we forget the terror which they would have for the three apostles. He is so changed: it is all so different from what they had been accustomed to. Hitherto He had been their leader and commander: they had leaned upon Him, now He appeals to them for aid. He must be in a sore strait, for they are to stay there and to watch: to watch as men do for a thief in the night, or as soldiers in war watch against sudden surprises and crafty foes. It is for this that they are separated from the rest; for this He has brought them into the seclusion of the garden: He needs their help. It is all so mysterious and terrifying; they would wonder what it all meant.

But here for a time we must leave them, though the "solitude and sufferings" are only just begun. He has made His dispositions for the conflict, but that is all. They are waiting for developments. The storm will burst upon them presently.

[1] περίλυπος, sorrowful all round: encompassed by sorrow.

MEDITATION II

THE AGONY

AMONG the dark trees, their twigs and branches silvered here and there with the rays of the moon, which also flecked the stony soil at their feet with patches of light, we left the Man of Sorrows and His amazed and bewildered companions.

They have not much time for thought, however, those three, even if they had not been too startled and frightened to think, for almost as He speaks He leaves them. "He went forward a little," St. Matthew says: St. Luke's version is that He was "withdrawn" or "parted" from them about a stone's cast. So you see He left them reluctantly; we might almost say He was dragged from them[1]; probably the Spirit which drove Him into the wilderness after His baptism now drives Him into solitude: He would fain have remained with them, could He have done so, but

[1] Ἀπεσπάσθη. The Vulgate has *avulsus est.* The same word is found in Acts xxi. 1, where the R.V. rendering is, "were parted from them."

some constraining force impels Him to go; it was "through the Eternal Spirit that He offered Himself unto GOD," and He must tread the wine-press *alone*. But He keeps within earshot; He cannot bear to be far away. You may be sure that their eyes followed Him, nay, were fastened on Him as He left them, and, thanks to the silver moon, they can see Him, even in the shade of the orchard. First, He kneels down, and then, apparently but a moment later, they see that He has fallen full length upon the ground. Ah! "heavy indeed was the burden of sin, for it bowed the SAVIOUR to the earth[1]"; He lies in the attitude of importunate prayer, for prayer is to be His refuge in this time of trouble; "I give myself unto prayer." They can catch His words, or some of them, because they have reported them—His were "strong cries"[2]—reported them as far as they could remember them: they have given us at any rate the substance of His supplications. Here let me say that we are not entitled to suppose that the Evangelists have in each case recalled the *exact words* of our LORD, either here, or in His other utterances. If you compare the narratives you will see that they cannot have done so. According to St.

[1] Ellicott.
[2] Heb. v. 7.

Matthew, He said, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me"; according to St. Mark, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; remove this cup from Me"; according to St. Luke, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me." You will observe that whilst the substance is the same, and whilst each Evangelist gives us the heart of His meaning, there are differences of form and expression. Well, I want to say to you that this is just what we ought to expect: it could not be otherwise without a continuous miracle. You must remember that His words were not taken down at the time: it never occurred to the disciples to write them down—more than that, it is doubtful whether they could have done it had they attempted it. Anyhow, it was not done, and that is how we have these variations. You will know by your own experience how almost impossible it is to recall the exact words of a conversation, even the day after it took place, and our LORD'S words were not recorded for many years after they were spoken; it is no wonder, therefore, that the Evangelists differ as they do: they give us the gist, the substance, but that is all. And they all tell us here that He addressed Himself to the Father—"Whither," says Matthew Henry, "should the child of GOD go, when anything grieves

him, but to his Father?"[1]—and that He prayed that this "hour" or this "cup" might pass from Him. What is this "cup" of which He speaks? Of course He means the sorrow, the shame, the misery which were set before Him, but the question remains—"What was that misery? What was it that He so much dreaded at that moment and that He prayed thrice that He might be spared?" It cannot have been death, not even the death of the Cross. We cannot believe that the PRINCE OF LIFE, human as He was, was afraid of death. Other men, immeasurably His inferiors, have faced it with dignity, with fortitude—Socrates did, Seneca did—and the Gospels give us no reason to think that our SAVIOUR quailed at all unworthily before His crucifixion. I suggest to you that what He was afraid of, what "amazed" Him and "distressed" Him was, not death, but sin, for we are told that the Father "made Him to be sin for us which knew no sin." That is to say, the unspotted CHRIST, to whom sin was utterly hateful and abominable, was for our salvation identified with sin; He not only bore our sins in His own body, but He was for the time regarded as the personification of sin. And

[1] Sir Matthew Hale paraphrazes this "Abba, Father" thus:—"It is not a stranger that importunes Thee: it is Thy Son . . . that Son whom Thou hearest always," etc.

if so, who can wonder at His amazement, at His horror? And it is much the same if we reject this idea and say that what He dreaded was the conflict with the powers of darkness; it was still the contact with evil from which He shrank. That He was sorely beset of the enemy we cannot doubt; He said Himself, "The Prince of this world cometh"; He spoke, too, of the "power of darkness." We are told again that, after the Temptation, "the devil departed from Him *for a season*," but it was only for a season; the crafts and assaults of Satan were renewed in Gethsemane. Then, too, the tempter did his worst, for Satan has great wrath when his time is short.[1] It is terrible to think of the manifold temptations with which he may have assailed our REDEEMER, Who was "in all things tempted like as we are"; it is no dishonour to our Immaculate LORD if we even suppose that the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" were invoked as instruments for His undoing. It is possible, too, that fierce reproaches and accusations were hurled at Him, for "the accuser of the brethren" may well have accused their LORD and HEAD. Picture to yourselves the worst that Satan could do, and you may be sure that your picture falls far short of the reality.

[1] Rev. xii. 12.

And so, it need not surprise us that our Gracious Master, who was truly Man, with a man's instinct for self-preservation, made supplication "with strong crying and tears" that this cup of shame and sin and black horror might pass from Him. Observe! He has just given His disciples a cup, but it was "the cup of *blessing*."[1] It is now His turn to drink, and the cup which the Father has given Him is "the cup of *trembling*"—"the cup of staggering," as it stands in the Revised Version. This deadly potion is held to His lips and He must drain it to the dregs.

And it shows with what dread and loathing He regarded it that He prayed *thrice* that it might pass from Him: He asked repeatedly that if it were anyhow possible it might be taken away. Why thrice? Why not four times or ten times, you may ask? The only answer I can give to that question is that three is the number, the signature of the Godhead, the badge of the Blessed Trinity; I am not sure, however, that that is the real reason. But I may remind you that St. Paul, too, "besought the LORD thrice" that the thorn in the flesh might be taken away, and the coincidence

[1] Keim holds that when CHRIST spoke thus, "the cup of the Last Supper was still in His mind." I think it extremely doubtful, especially in view of St. Matt. xx. 22 "Can ye drink of the cup," etc.

suggests that there may be some deep reason for this number. You may say, of course, that St. Paul only prayed thrice, after the example of his LORD, but the question still remains—Why should he think it necessary to imitate his Master in this particular?[1]

One thing, however, is certain: *we* may pray the Almighty thrice to remove any trial or temptation: we may pray definitely that it may pass from us, provided that we add to our prayer the words which our SAVIOUR added—and in His resignation we trace another lineament of our King—"Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." We may ask for almost anything if we couple with our request the limitation, "Thy will be done." Of course His will must be done; we can never dream of setting up our wills in opposition to His. His will is ever wiser, ever kinder and gentler than ours.

And here let me say that this prayer of Gethsemane is literally and truly "the LORD'S Prayer." We reserve that name for the *Paternoster*—"Our Father"—but why is that the LORD'S Prayer more than this?

[1] Keim, p. 14, remarks that "the number *three* belongs to the Jewish style of the authors." But the question remains: How did they acquire this style and use this number? St. Luke only makes mention of one petition, nor does he refer to the three within the inclosure, but his account is manifestly a compendious one.

Did CHRIST give the former for our use or did He prescribe it for our example? This prayer of the garden is also for us to use, for us to imitate, no less than that. In fact, this prayer is an echo or an abridgement of that other LORD'S Prayer. It is made up out of three of its petitions, "Lead us not into temptation"; "Deliver us from evil"; "Thy will be done." Our SAVIOUR, you see, prays as He has taught us to pray.

And when we come to consider, we find that this cry of resignation is the crown and blossom of all prayer. Not only in our sorrows and trials, but at all times; we can never rise to anything higher or better than this. Even in the depth of His agony, therefore, He teaches His disciples "how to pray." In His profound misery He remains our example and He teaches us a supreme lesson—to surrender our wills to GOD. "Our wills are ours—to make them thine."

But see! He now rises from prayer, rises from the dust, in which He has lain and out of which His body was compacted, and returns to His disciples. Twice in the course of the Agony He came to them. What a revelation it is, this coming and going, of His deep distress! He cannot rest in one place; cannot bear to be any longer alone; He must have companionship! They will be watching; it will comfort Him to see

them, to hear their voice. So, for a moment's respite, He returns to the three watchers—possibly to both groups—He had *hoped* that they would be watchers: He returns, and it is to find them all asleep![1]

Now, I can well believe that you have wondered how the three disciples *could* sleep at such a crisis, when they were so distressed and so alarmed: you would have thought that their dread and apprehensions would have kept them wide awake. But we must remember two things—first, that they were rude fisher-folk, men used to take their sleep in snatches, when they could get it, and men accustomed, too, to fall asleep when they had nothing to occupy them: you will remember that they slept at the Transfiguration; and, secondly, that the very grief which oppressed them conduced to sleep: St. Luke tells us plainly that they were "sleeping for *sorrow*." It is a merciful provision that sleep is the handmaid and attendant of trouble and tears: you know how a child will cry itself to sleep. Their sleeping proves their anxiety and distress, rather than their indifference.

But whatever the cause, it was a desertion, almost a betrayal. They had failed Him! He had taken them apart that they might watch, and they had not

[1] He had said, "The flesh is weak." This sleep shows it.—Weiss.

watched. It was therefore natural, and it was for their good, that He should reproach them, and St. Mark, who in his Gospel was "the interpreter of Peter" and has written down much what Peter told him, informs us that our LORD spoke first to Simon. "Simon,[1] sleepest *thou*?" It was fitting that He should address Peter first, not merely because he was "the first" among the twelve and often speaks and acts as their representative, but because he had been loudest in his protestations of devotion: "I will go with Thee to prison and to death"; "Though all men should be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." And there was another reason for this singling out of Simon; it was Simon that would soon deny Him with oaths and curses; this reproach should have put him on his guard. But He does not overlook the rest, for He says to all, though He still directs His words to Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

"One hour." Can we conclude anything from these words as to the time the Agony had lasted or would last? I think not; I do not suppose that we are to interpret the words literally. It may have been less than an hour; it may have been a little more. But

[1] Stier observes that Simon was no Peter—no rock or stone—here.

what of that? Time is not to be measured at such crises by the ticks of the clock or the march of the sun, but by the throbs of the tortured brain, by the throes of our complex being, which make one day seem like a thousand years. The surgeon's knife may only cut for a few brief seconds into our quivering flesh, but those few seconds may appear to us interminable. Do not say, therefore, that the Agony *only* lasted an hour: that hour would assume the proportions of an age.

But to return to the sleeping disciples: there is no comfort for our CHRIST, the King of Sorrows, in that quarter; He has not one faithful friend to watch with Him or for Him. You remember the words, "I looked for some to take pity, but there was none."[1] "His life with His disciples closed with a great disappointment."[2] Five days ago He was acclaimed as the coming King; now there is "none so poor as to do Him reverence." His mournful prediction that they would leave Him alone was fulfilled long before the disciples "forsook Him and fled." And may it not be for our comfort that this, His utter dereliction, is recorded? You, my brother, my sister, will die alone[3]; you will not be more alone than your

[1] Ps. lxix. 20. [2] Weiss.
[3] *Je meurrai seul.* Pascal.

REDEEMER was. And perhaps to you, too, when your friends fail you, there may appear an angel from heaven strengthening you.

So He goes back to His battle-field—back to the furnace or (shall we say, as the olive-press is so near?) back to the "great wine-press of the wrath of GOD." He was still the Son of GOD'S love, still the Beloved in whom GOD'S soul delighted; but He was also the sin-bearer—His soul was made an offering for sin—and as such it has pleased the Father to *bruise* Him. Do not say that this is unreasonable; that it is monstrous that GOD should punish an innocent Person for the wrong-doing of other men! That superficial objection loses sight of the fact that He who suffers is Himself GOD. For any judge to charge one man with other men's sins would be unjust; but there is no injustice, no wrong done to any man, if that judge, of his own free will, in his charity and compassion, pays the debt or sustains the penalty himself. It is an axiom of law that "no injury is done to a consenting party,"[1] and such CHRIST was. "He *gave* His life a ransom for many"; He laid it down of Himself; He

> "Who might th' advantage best have took
> Found out the remedy."

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[1] *Volenti non fit injuria.*

I said just now that our LORD went back to the battle, to the furnace; for the conflict, we cannot doubt, was renewed—perhaps its intensity was increased and its horrors were augmented. The ancient Greek liturgies speak of His "unknown sufferings"[1] in this Agony. We must always remember that their precise character and their volume are alike hidden from us; perhaps we could not comprehend them' even if they were described to us. But so great they were that He is driven before long from His post of prayer. He must go back to the three disciples, even if they were sleeping. And they were! "He found them sleeping again, for their eyes were heavy." Did He reproach them this time? If so, His words are not recorded. His coming certainly roused them, for St. Mark tells us that "they knew not what to answer him." As at the Transfiguration, they were dazed and bewildered, but then it was with His "excellent glory": now it is with His and their exceeding sorrow.

And here let me suggest to you that our SAVIOUR'S coming to them twice in the course of that "hour" may have partly been for their sakes. I have said that He craved companionship; that He hungered to see a human face and hear a human voice, and I have

[1] ἄγνωστα παθήματα.

no doubt that it was so. But there may have been another reason for this coming and going: it may have been to see how *they* fared in the conflict: to succour them if they were sorely tempted—you will remember that He said to them there and then, "Watch ye and pray, that *ye* enter not into temptation." We can hardly doubt, I think, that this restlessness was, in part, the result of His tender solicitude for them.

And when He returned the second time, then, I imagine, it was that those incidents occurred of which only St. Luke tells us, the visitation of an angel and the sweat of blood.[1] We cannot be sure, it is true, at what period of the Agony it was that these things happened,[2] but it seems reasonable to suppose that it was towards the close rather than at the beginning: as the conflict neared the end, He would want help more than ever. And there would be a peculiar fitness in this heavenly succour, if it came *after* His discovery that His disciples had again failed Him. You see the meaning it would have in that case: "Our

[1] Needless to say, the Rationalist expositors treat this as a legend, a later accretion to the story. Even Weiss holds that the text "is of such doubtful genuineness and uncertain origin that it is better to pass it over entirely." The words are wanting in A,B, 13, 69, 124, but a reason for this is given below, p. 42.

[2] Alford places it after the *first* return to the disciples.

help," it seems to say, "is in the name of the Lord." "Vain is the help of man." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put any confidence in princes." "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD taketh me up." But here the question presents itself: How could the Evangelist know about that angel, or about the "bloody sweat"—for neither of these was visible to the disciples: the angel appeared to our LORD alone, and in the moonlight, at the distance of a stone's cast, they could hardly tell what His streaming sweat was like.[1] I believe the answer to be that this part of the narrative St. Luke derived from St. Paul, who in turn had it "from the LORD." The apostle tells us[2] that he did not learn his gospel from man: it came to him "through revelation of JESUS CHRIST." His account of the Last Supper he had from the LORD[3]: he may at the same

[1] Lange, Edersheim, *al.* suggest that when our LORD returned to the three disciples they saw the sweat as of blood on His brow. But even if this were so, it would hardly account for the statement, "His sweat was as drops of blood, *falling to the ground.*" Alford remarks that "the marks of such drops would be visible after the termination of the Agony." But even if so—which is very doubtful—who, in the circumstances which followed, would think of looking for them? In Carlo Dolce's picture, the drops of sweat turn to beads of light—a beautiful conceit!

[2] Gal. i. 12.

[3] 1 Cor. xi. 23.

time and in the same way have heard the pathetic story of the Agony. In this way and, so far as I can see, in this way alone, can we account for these details. And it is one of these two details which has given a name to this part of the Passion: "Being in *an agony* (*i.e.* a conflict) he prayed the more earnestly." And as to the other—"an angel from heaven strengthened Him"—can you wonder at it, especially if, as we are assured, angels had ministered to Him in the first temptation[1] in the wilderness? He tells us Himself that He might have had twelve legions of angels to succour Him: can you wonder that one angel, one messenger of the Most High GOD appeared to Him and wrought for Him? Our own Milton has said that—

> "So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity
> That when a soul is found sincerely so
> A thousand liveried angels lacquey her,
> Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt."

That, you may say, is only a poetic fancy, but what is there fanciful in the belief that Eternal GOD, who has myriads of these heavenly messengers—for surely there are beings above us in the universe, as there are those beneath us—should send one in that hour of dread to comfort "the Son of His love"; what is

[1] Matt. iv. 11.

there unreasonable in supposing that angels minister, too, to us in our temptations? Angels, it is true, occupy an insignificant place in our present-day conceptions, but they hold a prominent place in the Bible story. And GOD works through means.

And what shall I say to you about the "bloody sweat"? Only this—that they were not drops of pure blood that fell to the ground, but "*as it were* great drops of blood"—that is to say, drops of sweat mixed with blood, or, possibly, drops which fell like thick gouts of blood. Had the Evangelist said "blood," it would be quite credible, for cases are recorded where the skin, in moments of extreme terror, has exuded blood and serum, but he does not say it; on the contrary, he guards us against that conclusion. Sweat and blood!—we may remember those words of St. John, "This is He that came by water and blood"; we may remember, too, the water and blood that streamed from CHRIST'S side. And we are told that at this time He "prayed the more earnestly"—with more fervent intensity than ever, for GOD was His only refuge. But see! He still prayed the same words—St. Matthew informs us that when He prayed the third time, it was in the same words as before. And why should He vary them? They embodied His heart's desires, so they were His

only petitions. We are sometimes reproached for our stereotyped liturgy: the same suffrages, they say, over and over again! Why should we not say them over and over again, if they represent our needs? We cannot tell the All-wise GOD what He does not know already, and if *we* want novelty, *He* cannot have it. "The same words"!—what a rebuke to the pretentiousness, the eloquence, the striving after effect which characterize some prayers that we have heard—some prayers, perhaps, that we have uttered! How simple is the "LORD'S Prayer": how short and practical and direct and unadorned was the LORD'S prayer of Gethsemane. "The sharpest agony is content to fall back on the iteration of the selfsame words."

And now the hour—the most awful hour, perhaps, that was ever spent in the history of mankind—draws to a close. His prayer has not been in vain; He was "*heard* in that He feared." The cup has not been taken away, but He has been given the strength to drink it. It was in His case, I imagine, as in St. Paul's; when the apostle prayed thrice against the thorn in the flesh, he received for answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Our dying Master must be made perfect through suffering, but His prayer brought Him the strength to suffer.

So, for the third time, He comes to the disciples—

He comes to them now because the band of officers and men sent to apprehend Him is drawing near and He knows it, and He must be there to meet them. The three were still sleeping; how otherwise can we account for the words "Sleep on now," or "Sleep on henceforth[1] and take your rest." He reproaches them again for their failing Him in His hour of dread and for endangering their own souls; He suggests that there was a time for them to watch and that that time is past; now it matters little whether they sleep or wake. It was observed by one of the ancients that the first time our LORD went to the three, He reproached them for sleeping; the second time He was silent; the third time He bids them sleep on. Yes, but He tells them to sleep on in a sort of sorrowful irony,[2] as the next words show.[3] "Sleep on, if you can, but you cannot; you have done enough of that; the hour"—see how He passes from one hour, one period of His Passion to another—"the hour is come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

[1] καθεύδετε τὸ λοιπὸν.

[2] "Then, His irony passed into seriousness, for He saw the band."—Keim, p. 14.

[3] It has been held, by St. Augustine *e.g.*, that they did sleep on for a brief period. Others have held that when our LORD spoke thus, the traitor was not yet in sight.

"Of sinners"! So it seems as if He, the All-holy and spotless One, could not get away from sin, from contact with it. In Gethsemane, it was the evil one: He is delivered from Satan's assaults, only to fall into the hands of Satan's children—"given up into the hands of wicked men," as the collect expresses it. The sinless One is surrounded and encompassed by sin.

And while He yet speaks, the multitude, with swords and staves and with Judas in front as its guide, descends into the valley and crosses the Kidron and approaches the spot. And its approach it was that called forth our Saviour's next words: "Arise, let us be going; behold, he that betrayeth Me is at hand."

"Arise"! So He *must* have spoken ironically when a moment before He bade them "sleep on and take their rest." "Let us be going"! But whither did He propose to go? He cannot have been thinking of escape; no, "the cup" is still there and He must drink it. But He may have contemplated the disappearance of His disciples. We know how anxious He was for their safety—we shall presently see how He pleads for it—and He may have designed, by moving on, to give them the opportunity of slipping

away, when the time came, unobserved, as, in fact, they seem to have done. In the inclosed garden they were in a way imprisoned; out in the open, they would have a better chance of escaping.

So have we watched with CHRIST through the hour of His unspeakable Agony, watched Him "in His solitude and sufferings." But before we pass on there is one further observation to be made. It is that this is unquestionably a true story which the Evangelists have recorded for us. No candid person can doubt that some such events as these took place that night.

And for this reason, that no disciple would have dreamed of concocting such a story. Not only has it every mark of truthfulness—it bears on its face the stamp of veracity[1]—but it was so humiliating, humiliating to themselves as well as to their Master, that no one would go out of his way to write such a narrative. Why tell the world of CHRIST'S utter prostration and helplessness and misery, and of their own unfaithfulness, of their sleeping when they should

[1] "Any one can see, without having verified the details, that we have here a thoroughly genuine passage of human suffering, without adornment, without glorifying exaggeration." —Keim, p. 15. "How unlikely it is that such fear would be falsely attributed to JESUS by tradition!"—Weiss, p. 321.

have been watching, unless these things had really happened?

And in corroboration of this view I may remind you that (as we learn from the margin of the Revised Version) some ancient authorities omit verses 33 and 34 of St. Luke's 23rd chapter, the two verses which tell of the angel which strengthened our LORD and of the bloody sweat.[1] And one ancient writer[2] tells us why they were left out in some manuscripts—they were expunged by the orthodox as containing statements thought to be inconsistent with the Divine nature of our LORD. It was a stumblingblock to them to read of a REDEEMER who was so helpless, so they suppressed the passage. I only mention this, however, to show you that no one would have forged the entire narrative: its character of itself proves it to be genuine. So the King of Glory did suffer thus for us men and for our salvation. It is distinctly more difficult to believe that these simple, natural, unpretentious narratives are fabrications, than to hold that these events happened as described.

But perhaps you reply that the real difficulty, with

[1] They are not found in the Alexandrian and Vatican MSS., and "there are marks of suspicion in other MSS."—Ellicott.

[2] Epiphanius, *Ancoratus*, 31.

you at least, is not that: it is to believe that all this happened to a *Divine* Person; perhaps the bold claim, made in these pages, for the Godhead of the Sufferer has staggered you. Well, I cannot deny that the doctrine of the Incarnation does make a large demand upon our faith, especially when we remember the infinite and utterly inconceivable power and majesty of the CREATOR and our own absolute insignificance. What is our planet in the mighty framework of the universe? It has been compared to a soap-bubble in St. Paul's Cathedral. And what is man upon this planet? a breath, a vapour which appears for a moment and then passes away. All the same, I am confirmed in my belief, or rather the Church's belief, in the Divine as well as the human nature of our LORD by the very magnificence of the idea and all that hangs upon it. I first accept it because Christendom, the great society of GOD, has ever taught it: I hold it, because the records of that society, the sacred Scriptures, seem to leave me no option, but I am strengthened in this belief by the teachings of science as well as of revelation. Persuaded beforehand of the infinite love and compassion of the Unseen and Ineffable Power, I do not find it hard to believe that that great love has gone so far as to lift our manhood

up to GOD, especially when it has already endowed us with the Divine attribute of Freewill.[1] I see in the records of the ages the gradual evolution of the creature from the simplest and rudest forms of the life up to man, the crown of all created things, and, seeing this, it is no great strain to believe that Immortal Love has gone one step farther and has become man to make man a partaker of the Divine nature. The very splendour of the conception —that "the Son of GOD became the Son of Man that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of GOD"—together with the unspeakable charity and the prodigious cost with which this high purpose was accomplished, a charity which culminated in the cross, fortifies me in the belief of the noble army of saints and martyrs and scholars that the beautiful and pathetic Figure seen among the trees of Gethsemane, arraigned in the halls of Annas and of Pilate, and racked and mocked upon the tree of shame, is that of the very and eternal Son of GOD. And this it is that challenges, that compels our homage, our love and adoration—that "though He was rich yet for our sakes He became poor"; that "being in the form of GOD" He "counted it not a prize to be on an equality

[1] "Tria mirabilia fecit Dominus; res ex nihilo, liberum arbitrium et hominem Deum."—Descartes.

with GOD, but emptied himself" and "humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross."

And see how the doctrine of "Divine Immanence," which is winning its way amongst us, bears on this belief. GOD, the "Eternal, Immortal, Invisible," is in all men and in all things; He upholds them all by the word of His power; in Him "we live and move and have our being." But He is not in all *alike*. All men are the sons of GOD, for example, but Christian men are sons as others are not. And CHRIST is a Son as they are not—He is the "only-begotten of the Father." The Godhead dwells in us, but "in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Is He Divine? So in a sense are we—"partakers of the Divine nature." The indwelling of the Ineffable GOD, as the Life and Light of Men, and specially of them that believe, should help to solve your difficulty.

Anyhow, this belief will colour, if it does not inspire, all these meditations of ours, first and last; this study of the story of our LORD'S last hours assumes that this JESUS of Nazareth Who was betrayed, bound, condemned, crucified, was "very GOD of very GOD."

"O Love, how deep! how broad! how high!
It fills the heart with ecstasy,
That GOD, the Son of GOD, should take
Our mortal form for mortals' sake!

He sent no angel to our race
Of higher or of lower place,
But wore the robe of human frame
Himself, and to this lost world came."

MEDITATION III

THE BETRAYAL

MUCH prominence is given, in the pages of the Evangelists, to the sleep of the disciples during our SAVIOUR'S agony. But how different it was with His enemies!—all this time both Judas and "the Chief Priests and elders and scribes" had been waking and working: they had been perfecting their preparations for seizing our LORD. You see how "the children of this world are in their generation" both wiser and busier "than the children of light."

No, they have not slept, and they have lost no time; everything is arranged, the band of men, the weapons, the lanterns, the sign. One Evangelist[1] tells us that it was "a great multitude" that set out to apprehend our REDEEMER. Judas had covenanted, you may remember, to betray Him "in the absence of the multitude"; now we find that he does it in the presence of a multitude. But that multitude was not one which they had to fear: that crowd would give them no

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 47.

trouble: it was made up of sympathizers and helpers; it was "the common people," the *'amhaaretz*, of whom they spoke with so much scorn, and especially the crowd of pilgrims from Galilee ("there were quite enough of Galileans in the city to rescue Him, if they had been apprized" of His arrest [1]), that was the multitude that the chief priests and rulers dreaded. Palm Sunday had convinced them, if nothing before, that our SAVIOUR had a host of friends; He must therefore be seized in the absence of those friends, at a time, in a place, where there would be few to defend Him. So Gethsemane was fixed on—that place of resort was well known to Judas—and this late hour, verging towards midnight. And for this mission a comparatively small company of soldiers, of the *Shoterim*, or Levitical guard—for I cannot believe that Roman soldiers were employed in this work [2]—would suffice,

[1] Weiss.

[2] The expositors, with scarcely an exception, see in the words σπεῖρα and χιλίαρχος (St. John xviii. 3, 12) convincing proof that a contingent of Roman soldiers was placed at the disposal of the Jewish authorities for the apprehension of our Saviour, and I cannot deny that this is the *prima facie* impression conveyed by those words: they are terms which we should never expect to find employed of any purely Hebrew force. But I am compelled to reject this conclusion, nevertheless; I hold that the difficulties in the way of accepting it exceed those of rejecting it. Among such difficulties are these. 1. That the very next words inform us that Judas received this contingent along with officers, "*from*

but I suspect that the numbers increased far beyond the intentions of the authorities. The expedition would not, could not be kept so secret but that its destination would be confided to some congenial persons—"certain lewd fellows of the baser sort"; yes, and certain zealots for the law too—and they would all want to have a part in it, and so the appointed band was reinforced by a number of ruffians, and a number of fanatics—"how are they increased

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the Chief Priests and Pharisees." 2. That both St. Mark and St. Matthew speak to the same effect; the "band" or "multitude" according to them was furnished by Jews, not Romans. 3. That neither Pilate nor any subordinate was at all likely to lend a force—and to Judas too—for the seizure of a man against whom no crime was as yet alleged (see St. John xviii. 29). 4. That the scholars are all agreed that the term σπεῖρα *cannot* be taken literally: a cohort consisted of 600 men, and it is almost inconceivable that such a regiment would be employed for such a purpose. 5. That if Pilate's auxiliaries had been engaged in this work, they would inevitably have taken their prisoner to him and not to Annas. 6. That there is no further reference to this supposed Roman band or to its operations in any Gospel. I think it much more likely, therefore, that St. John employs these two words loosely, or if you like inaccurately, which as a Hebrew he might easily do, than that a cohort or any part of a cohort should have been set to work. Keim, indeed (p. 25), dismisses St. John's account as unhistorical, partly *because* of this mention of the σπεῖρα: he cannot believe that Roman troops stood ready to be employed in a purely Jewish matter, nor yet that, if employed, they would have straightway taken JESUS to the Chief Priests.

that trouble" Him! They are provided with weapons, for they expect that the disciples will fight for their Master: "swords and staves," *i. e.* clubs, are specified; perhaps the soldiers carried the swords, whilst the volunteers, the varlets and fanatics of the city, in the main carried the staves. They are provided with "lanterns and torches"—some with the one, some with the other. But why these flaring torches when the moon was at the full?[1] It must have been because they thought that He might hide among the trees of the garden, as our first parents did; He might hide and they might have to hunt for Him, so they come prepared. Once before He had "conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in the place,"[2] so He may do it again. Such, then, was the composition of the band and such its equipment, and each of these features was a silent tribute to our LORD'S powers; it was for no ordinary person that such extravagant preparations were made; He had defied or evaded them hitherto; they must make sure of Him this time. Each of these circumstances, too, was a humiliation to our King, as we shall hear from His own lips presently; torches and weapons are

[1] It has been contended that the full moon fell a week before this date: see Trench, *The Crucifixion of Christ*, p. 32, note.

[2] St. John v. 13.

only needed for desperadoes, for cut-throats and criminals. But the sacred writers fix our attention on the leader rather than on the band. It is "Judas, one of the twelve" that is the prominent figure—"*with Him*," we are told, was a "great multitude": the armed rabble is all of his doing. And he was prominent at the time, for he "went before them"; he was, as St. Peter said at a later date, "guide to them that took JESUS."[1] I spoke a moment ago of the humiliations which our CHRIST had to undergo; I question if among them all there was one to compare with this, that He was betrayed by one of the twelve. Nothing wounds so deeply as treachery, and we have many proofs how acutely both our LORD and His disciples felt this stigma and this cruelty. A year before this time he had said, "Have I not chosen you the twelve, and one of you is a devil?"—even then, you see, the prospect of this infamy burdened His soul. So again, in the Supper chamber, He was troubled in the spirit and testified and said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me!"[2] And again, "It is one of the twelve, he that dippeth with Me in the dish."[3] That

[1] Acts i. 16.
[2] St. John xiii. 21.
[3] St. Mark xiv. 20.

"His own familiar friend whom He trusted," who had seen His works and heard His words, and gone in His company to the house of GOD—that *he* should turn upon Him and make common cause with His enemies, with those that sought His life, this was one of our Master's bitterest trials; the iron must have entered His soul as He thought of that renegade apostle. But perhaps it is well for us that it was so. For one thing, it assures us of the truth of this narrative. Which of the disciples could have recorded their own disgrace, if it had not happened,[1] for, of course, it was a blow to them and a discredit to their religion that a standard-bearer, such as Judas was, should have lifted up his heel against them. But it does much more for us than that; it prepares us for unworthy and even wicked ministers of CHRIST. You know, everybody knows that, take what care we will, we cannot prevent some bad men finding their way into the ministry. And there are those who stumble at this and renounce the Church altogether on this account. But it is no strange thing that has happened. Why, we are told beforehand, and told in the most emphatic way, to expect it; there was a "devil" among the twelve apostles: could we have a more

[1] Keim is quite clear that Christians could never have invented such a crime for an apostle.

striking object-lesson? And here is something more that we learn; we are not to say that these bad or unspiritual men are not ministers of CHRIST. That is sometimes said, but it is in the teeth of this narrative and of other Scriptures. Judas *was* CHRIST'S messenger, CHRIST'S apostle; though he was a devil he was employed to cast out devils, and he is distinctly and repeatedly called "one of the twelve": such he was even when he betrayed his Master.[1] The betrayal, therefore, has its doctrinal aspect, its clear message as to the ministry, and that message, one very necessary for these times. The kiss is especially singled out for mention. It was the custom for the disciples of a Rabbi to kiss their master; no doubt the apostles had habitually kissed our LORD; that is why this sign was chosen. And some such token was needed, because in the dark garden and in the confusion, possibly the *mêlée*, the officers might otherwise seize the wrong person, especially if we may trust the very old tradition[2] that one of the apostles, James the Little, closely resembled our SAVIOUR. It was, I imagine, near the entrance to the orchard, where the eight disciples had been sleeping, that the SAVIOUR and Sovereign of mankind encountered Judas and his motley following.

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 14, 47; St. Mark xiv. 20, 43.

[2] It goes back to Ignatius.

As the troop approaches Him, He "went forth," He stepped out in front to meet it; He knew what was coming and He must bear the brunt of the encounter; He must fasten attention upon Himself and so shelter His disciples, just as you have seen the parent bird, when the cat approaches the nest, obtrude itself and endanger itself for the safety of its brood. Observe, when they sought to make Him a king, He fled; now that they seek to put Him to death, He goes calmly forth to meet them.[1] He is at once recognized, and the traitor hurriedly[2] approaches Him—both Matthew and Mark are explicit that Judas acted *at once:* no doubt he would want to get it done with: he may even have feared that his courage would fail him—hurriedly approached Him with the salutation, "Rabbi, Rabbi!" on his lips—"his words were smoother than butter"—and kisses Him—the word[3] may mean "kissed Him much," "kissed Him loudly, obtrusively."[4] And those deceitful kisses drew from our SAVIOUR two sentences which, at first, it is not easy to reconcile. According to St. Luke, He said, "Judas, with a kiss"—the symbol of peace—"betrayest thou the Son of Man?" According to St. Matthew,

[1] So Stier.

[2] St. Mark xiv. 25.

[3] *κατεφίλησεν.*

[4] "The demonstrative kiss has no parallel in history, and could hardly have been invented."—Hasting's *Dict.*, ii. 779.

"Friend, comrade, do that for which thou art come." I suggest to you that the first-cited words were spoken in an undertone—they were for the ear of Judas alone, to bring home to him his sin—and that the second sentence was said aloud, so that all could hear it: it concerned the rest; it bade them proceed with their task; He will offer no opposition; nay, He will rather help them. That is why He addresses the band and asks, "Whom seek ye?" Judas, the signal being given, and his work as guide being done, perhaps also being convicted in his conscience by CHRIST'S remonstrance, has by this time withdrawn into the background, or rather has fallen into line with his new companions—St. John, evidently writing with a vivid recollection of the scene, says that "Judas, who betrayed Him, *stood among them*"; it is a kind of parenthesis in his narrative, and it shows the amazement, the consternation with which the eleven now realized that there was a traitor in their own ranks—the customary kiss had not opened their eyes—Judas stood there, but he leaves it to others to answer the question. They do answer it; they say that they are in quest of "JESUS of Nazareth."[1] He answers to the

[1] Matt. Henry suggests that our LORD may have been so described in the warrant for His apprehension. But would they have a written warrant?

name: He replies, "I am He," at which word His assailants, we read, "went backward and fell to the ground."

Now, was this falling in any sense miraculous? That is not stated, nor am I sure that it is implied. But if it was supernatural, can you wonder at it? Such a miracle, if miracle it was, can cause no difficulty to those who believe that JESUS was the Son of GOD; in that case we are prepared for signs and portents, and do what we will, we cannot get away from the miraculous in the New Testament. Miracles, says a thoughtful writer,[1] are the evidences of a present GOD. If it really was GOD Incarnate on Whom they were about to lay their sacrilegious hands, it can cause us no astonishment that the creatures that He has made should receive such a check and such a warning, and if it was a miracle, what does that involve? Only that, for one moment, they should see Him as He was and as the three saw Him, white and glistening, on the holy mount; they would start back in terror from His shining presence and fall the one over the other.[2] It is not necessary, however, to suppose a miracle. A

[1] Rothe.

[2] I was once disposed to think that they recognized in these two words "I am" an echo of the incommunicable name. But the same ἐγώ εἰμι in St. John iv. 26; vi. 20; viii. 24, 28, 58 and xiii. 19, forbids the idea.

sudden panic, a "contagious terror," might well lay hold upon them, as they thought of the wonders which He had wrought, albeit they ascribed His miracles to magic, and so those who came upon Him to eat up His flesh would stumble and fall.[1] But, whatever the cause, there was a reason for this repulse: it helped to secure the escape of His disciples. For when the men recover from their fright and approach Him again and He asks a second time, "Whom seek ye?" and they reply as before, but probably with bated breath, "JESUS of Nazareth," then it was, you will observe, that He bargained, and bargained successfully, for the safety of His followers: "If ye seek Me, let these go their way." It is just possible that some arrests had already been made; anyhow, they all escaped. I must again ask you to observe how He sacrifices Himself for the safety of His "little flock"; you see how dear they were to Him; it was His boast that He could say, "Of them whom Thou gavest Me have I lost none." That little flock He had trained and appointed for carrying on His work; on them the regeneration of mankind, in the first instance, depended; no wonder they were so precious in His sight: precious not only for their own sakes but also for those who should hereafter believe on Him through their word. The

[1] Ps. xxvii. 2.

minions of the Chief Priests may take Him when they will; they will only fulfil "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of GOD," but "these poor sheep, what have they done?" Ah, it is worth remembering that the One Who said, "Lo, I *come*," is the same Who said, "Let these *go their way*." His the shame and sorrow: theirs the safety! The leaders of the band understand His meaning, and they take Him at His word—"Then came they and laid hands on JESUS and took Him"—to borrow David's words,[1] "they were not afraid to put forth their hand to destroy the LORD'S Anointed." So the traitor has accomplished his mission; the first act in the awful tragedy is completed; the King of glory is a captive in the hands of wicked .men; rough and brutal creatures hold their CREATOR—for that He was, though veiled in human flesh—in their grip. O let us adore the infinite mercy and charity of our CHRIST, Who for our salvation was contented to be a prisoner, to surrender His sacred person to the tender mercies of a band of ruffians, and to be dragged to His death.

"Christ, by coward hands betrayed,
Christ, for us a captive made,
Christ upon the accursed tree,
Slain for man, be praise to Thee."

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[1] 2 Sam. i. 14.

MEDITATION IV

THE ARREST

"A WONDERFUL and horrible thing is come to pass in the land"—a thing far more dreadful than that of which the prophet spake."[1] The tumultuary mob, sent by the leaders of the Jewish Church to apprehend our SAVIOUR, has seized Him, and now detains Him. How horrible it was His poor bewildered disciples did not know at the time; to them it only seemed that this rabble had arrested the best and wisest and most wonderful of men. And that was an outrage which they could not endure: their blood, I dare say, boiled at this insult to their Master, and so they ask, "LORD, shall we smite with the sword?" They had misunderstood His words, as they so often did. He had said, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his cloke and buy one," but He never meant them to take it literally. I make no doubt that they would all have forthwith armed themselves with swords—they may have brought these weapons

[1] Jer. v. 30.

up with them from Galilee, for the roads were infested with robbers[1]—and that, though it was not permitted to carry weapons during the Feast. As it was, they had two, and they would certainly have fought then and there had He given the word. One of the twelve, in fact, waits for no permission: having a sword, he drew it and struck a servant of the High Priest and cut off his right ear. It was a murderous blow, and had not the man swerved, or the aim been faulty, it would probably have split his skull. Thanks to St. John, we know who that disciple was: the synoptists must have known, but for some reason or other they suppressed the name.[2] St. John, writing when the disciple in question had long been dead and buried, could have no scruples, and he tells us that it was Simon Peter and also that the servant's name was Malchus. St. John, you will remember, was somehow familiar with the household of the Chief Priest, and would easily learn the man's name, if he did not already know it. I ask you here to notice the impetuosity, the rashness of Simon, because it is so entirely in keeping with what we read elsewhere about him; his character never varies by a hair's-breadth

[1] Alford, *in loc.*

[2] The reason cannot have been that it would involve Peter in danger to mention it. The assault did not do that at the time.

throughout the Gospels, and that entire consistency is one proof of their veracity: you can see that Peter, for one, is painted from the life. And this incident accords well, too, with the rest of the Passion story; Peter may have been impelled to take and to draw the sword by recollecting how he had promised to go with our SAVIOUR to prison and to death, or even by the consideration that he was "the first" among the twelve, their leader and spokesman. But whatever he was and whatever moved him, he is rebuked for his intemperate zeal. "We must not only see our cause good but our call clear before we draw the sword."[1] "Put up thy sword into its place." "Its place!" And what, let us ask here, is the proper place for the sword? The proper place for the sword is the scabbard; that is its home: there it should rest; it is a danger to life when it leaves its resting-place; "they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," as history shows us has happened again and again. Moreover, religion is to be defended not by fighting, but by dying for it.[2] And now there comes a beautiful incident in this amazing story. What are we to understand by those next-recorded words, "And JESUS answering said, Suffer ye thus far?" The context of St. Luke, who alone records them, supplies the answer

[1] M. Henry. [2] *Ibid.*

—"And He touched his ear and healed him." Our Lord asked His captors to release their hold sufficiently to admit of His touching the bleeding ear; He craved enough freedom to perform this work of mercy, this act of reparation. "He consecrated His last moments of liberty to the healing of one of His enemies."[1] But perhaps you will say, "What necessity was there for Him to make any such request? If He could heal the man, He could heal him without any touch, or He could have set Himself free from those who detained Him. Yes, He *could* have done both, but He would not; He would rather be a suppliant for this measure of liberty. For it was His way, or rather, it was His property, to heal and bless through the touch; contact of His Person with the persons of the sick or the blind or the children was as a rule the medium, the channel of a cure or a blessing; power proceeded from His body. You remember how on one occasion He said "Somebody did touch Me, for I perceived that power is gone out from Me."[2] Elsewhere we are told that "all the multitude sought to touch Him, for power came forth from Him and healed them all."[3] And again, "As many as touched Him

[1] Tissot, p. 104.
[2] St. Luke viii. 46.
[3] Chap. vi. 19.

were made whole."[1] That contact was sacramental: it was an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace thereby given. Why, then, should He dispense with this instrument of blessing? Why deny to Malchus the virtue that was resident in His sacred form and that issued from it? And here I must remind you that as our Saviour healed the sick body, even so He now restores the sin-sick soul; the pardon, the grace, comes from Him, but it comes, ordinarily, through means, channels, instruments. He is no longer with us to lay hands on the sick, or pronounce the absolving word, but we have His touch, His speech, in the sacraments which He has appointed. And it is, I am bound to say, one defect of our popular religion, that it ignores the sacramental touch of our Redeemer. They will have it that practically all forms are superfluous; sometimes they say that they are unspiritual or unevangelical, and yet He was constantly using them and, more, He ordained them for our use. Grace, it is true, is not tied to means, but we are tied to the use of them. And as to that second question—Of course, He could have set Himself free, but it was not His purpose to set Himself free: it was His settled purpose to suffer and to die. Moreover, He had preached to men that they were not to resist

[1] St. Matt. xiv. 36.

evil; was He then to set an example of resisting it? And see what we should have lost, had He done it! You would not in that case have witnessed the sublime spectacle of the Lord of Glory, the heir of all things, stooping to ask to have His Hands released in order that He might heal an aggressor, a persecutor who was even then dragging Him to His death.

And this act of mercy, of loving-kindness, performed, it looks as if He had turned again to Peter, who perhaps had stood the while secretly fuming and spoiling for a fight, turned to him with the words, "Put up thy sword into its sheath;[1] the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" So that cup of which He spoke in Gethsemane is still at His lips: He is only draining it by degrees. One cruel draught He had in the Agony: He has another in the Apprehension. Peter means well, but GOD'S will must be done. Nor does He need Peter's poor services: "Thinkest thou," He says to him, "that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now"—even now, for they fly swiftly[2]—"send Me more than twelve legions of angels—twelve legions in the place of

[1] "For the Church there is in this word a solemn warning . . . especially for that Church which calls itself by the name of Peter."—Lange.

[2] Dan. ix. 21.

twelve feeble disciples, or the idea may be that of an "innumerable company of angels," of a force—"legions," because they are a "marshalled and disciplined host"—which would utterly rout His adversaries. Peter was to know that all the angelic army (and "the chariots of GOD are twenty thousand") was at His Master's service. The thousands who "at his bidding wait, And post o'er land and ocean without rest" would at a word have been at His side. But in that case what was to become of us and of the world's redemption?—what about the unfolding, the fulfilment of GOD'S gracious purposes as declared in the Scriptures? That rescue would mean our ruin: the twelve legions must therefore keep their camp, and He, their King, must tread His path of shame and suffering alone and unrelieved.

It was at this point, apparently, that our SAVIOUR, Who would not resist His captors, reasoned with them; He expostulated or protested against the gratuitous indignity that was put upon Him. "In that hour said JESUS to the *multitudes*"[1]—do you observe the

[1] St. Luke specifies the "Chief Priests and captains of the temple" as those to whom this remonstrance was mainly addressed. They would seem at this point to have come to the front: hitherto, they may have remained in the background. The expression "captains," etc. is used loosely: strictly there was but one (Keim, p. 23, note). It is pure arbitrariness to say

plural number?—is it possible that other bands, other crowds, hearing of the expedition, have arrived on the scene?—"Are ye come out as against a robber, with swords and staves to seize Me?" Why this display of force? why this expedition by night?[1] "I sat daily —sat in peace and unmolested—"in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not." Any day and all day long you might have apprehended Me: why must it be done in the dark and black night and by this tumultuous crowd? What need of a guide and lanterns and weapons, when you knew where to find Me? What have I done or said to merit this shame? Ah, He might have repeated those words, "Many good works have I showed unto you from My Father; for which of those works do ye" seize Me? But I will tell you (He proceeded to say) why it is. "This is your hour": the dead of night (it was past midnight) suits you well; the dark is your fitting time, for you are allied with the power of darkness, and are doing its

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that the presence of any of the Sanhedrists or rulers is hardly credible. Their anxiety and impatience, considering what was at stake, may well have urged some of the number, even if they did not set out with the band, to follow later and so appear on the scene. And Alford notices an undesigned coincidence between this verse and the words reported in St. Matthew, "I sate daily *in the temple.*"

[1] According to the Mishna, arrest after sunset was illegal.

work. You have power over Me, and Satan has power over you."

And now see how this public shame is straightway followed by another. "Then all the disciples forsook Him, and fled."[1] How true are those words if applied to our Adorable CHRIST, "All thy waves and billows are gone over Me."[2] The ruffians seize Him; the disciples forsake Him, and so add affliction to His bonds. As at St. Paul's first answer, no man stood by Him.[3] The eleven have gathered from His words that He is not to be liberated: they are not to fight, and He will not set Himself free: then "to your tents, O Israel." They cannot serve Him by remaining; they will only endanger their own lives. So with one accord they steal away and leave Him alone. "*All* the disciples!" I dare say you have noticed the marked antithesis in the narrative.[4] "Likewise also said all the disciples"—so we read some verses before. Now we read, "All the disciples forsook

[1] Keim maintains that there was no need for them to flee; it was only our LORD that the band wanted; if they secured and silenced Him, they thought that the movement would forthwith collapse. There was no attempt to seize Peter, even when he was accused in the *aula*. If so, this adds to the shame of their desertion.

[2] Ps. xlii. 7.

[3] 2 Tim. iv. 16.

[4] St. Matt. xxvi. 35 and 56.

Him, and fled." All had vowed that, if they must die with Him, they would not deny Him: all of them, without exception, have broken their vow. He is left alone; they are scattering "every man to his own," his own interests, his own belongings, his own household. Two of them, it is true, follow Him, but *they* only follow at a distance; they are too terrified to do more.

And so the shadows deepen that lie across the REDEEMER'S soul. He is not only apprehended, but He is deserted. Here is a fresh misery! He had foretold it as such: "Ye shall leave Me alone." Of the twelve men whom He had chosen and cherished and loved and taught, but one remained—we may presume that *he* remained—the traitor; the rest are stealing away "as people that are ashamed steal away when they flee in battle."[1] He "looked for some to take pity, but there was none, neither found He any to comfort Him."

And I suspect that this desertion was not unobserved by the multitude, and that it occasioned them some surprise. Their task was much easier than they had anticipated. They had gone prepared for an encounter: they had formed a high estimate of the number and devotion of His disciples. But they have

[1] 2 Sam. xix. 3.

accomplished their mission without any resistance to speak of, and of His apostles not one is to be seen. They can now breathe freely: they secure their prisoner and set out for the house of Annas. And all this time, "Jerusalem slept in peace, and did not know what had happened."[1]

And their course would probably lead them down the valley of the Kidron, the valley of Jehoshaphat. And if so, they would pass on their way the village of Siloam. Not that the exact route matters, and we can only conjecture as to where the house of Annas was: what it suffices us to know is that the surging, seething multitude passed at least one house. Now, needless to say, the bare tramp of so many men, apart from their voices, their shouts and possibly their boisterous laughter, would awake many echoes in the still and placid night; it would rouse from sleep some of those who were on the line of their march. St. Mark in his Gospel tells us of one such person. "A certain young man followed with him, having a linen cloth cast about him, over his naked body." Obviously this youth had been startled from his sleep by the noise—how else can we account for his undress?—and looking out of the lattice, he recognized our SAVIOUR in the moonlight, and, hastily wrapping himself in this

[1] Weiss, p. 321.

linen sheet, followed in His train, full of apprehension I say he recognized our LORD, because otherwise he would hardly have ventured forth without first clothing himself: his haste betrays his anxiety. So there is one disciple who is faithful to the Master. But it was not for long; his appearance on the scene, the more so because of its grotesqueness, attracted attention; some of the ribald throng "laid hold on him," whereupon, thoroughly frightened, he left the linen cloth in their grasp and fled away naked. And this is a fresh desertion of our LORD.

Now, why is this incident retained: nay, how came it to be related? None of the Evangelists saw this young man despoiled of his clothing, for all the disciples had fled. St. Mark alone relates it. Whence did he derive his information? I believe the true account to be that this young man was not Lazarus, as some have supposed, and still less St. Paul, but St. Mark himself. If this happened to *him*, we can well understand his recording it. But it is not so easy to account for its appearance in this brief Gospel, if it happened to a stranger.[1]

And all the circumstances agree with this identification. We know that Mary, "the mother of John

[1] "This passage can only be of moment if that youth was . . . the Evangelist himself."—Weiss, p. 331.

whose surname was Mark," had a house in or near Jerusalem.[1] We know that both he and she, a little later, were among CHRIST'S disciples. It seems, too, as if she were a person of substance, for her house was a kind of centre, was a meeting-place for some of the Christians of the city.[2] And there is one word in the narrative which may possibly suggest that this young man was in a fairly affluent position: it is the word *Sindon*,[3] translated "linen cloth," but which is believed to point to a robe or fabric from Sind, or India—Sind and Ind are practically the same.[4] Altogether, therefore, though we cannot be positive, I think we may assume that it is of himself that the Evangelist Mark here writes.

And, if so, we have an answer to the question, "Why is this 'almost comic incident' recorded": it seems too trivial to merit a place in the story of this awful tragedy? No, not if it happened to the Evangelist himself; there was a reason, then, why he should and would write it down.[5] For the sacred writers

[1] Weiss has no hesitation in saying that Mark came from the house where JESUS had supped, which house, he adds, was that of Mark's *father!*—p. 332.

[2] Acts xii. 12.

[3] σινδόνα. It is used of our LORD'S winding-sheet, St. Mark xv. 46, etc.

[4] Edersheim, however, observes that in the Rabbinical writings, *Sedina* merely signifies a loose wrapper.

[5] "Whenever we have obscure little incidents of this kind

seldom mention what they said or did themselves, unless it was something to their own disparagement. Now, St. Mark, you remember, was inconstant; he deserted Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary tour.[1] That he repented of his inconstancy we cannot doubt; St. Paul's language respecting him [2] proves it. But, though he was forgiven, he could not forget it; it must have grieved him years afterwards, as he remembered the unworthy part that he had played. And then the time came when it devolved on him to write the story of the Passion, to write it as the amanuensis of St. Peter. He tells of Peter's fall: the apostle doubtless insisted that he should do so. Then he remembers that he himself was not without blame. Ah! *he* has been inconstant more than once. Shall he tell of Peter's denials and not of his own desertion? There is no need to mention his name: he was not important enough for that, but he must tell of that "young man"—many of the disciples would know who it was—who at first

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singled out for narration, we may be sure that there is a reason for it, and most often a personal reason."—Sanday, p. 83.

[1] Acts xiii. 13; xv. 38.

[2] Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11.

followed CHRIST, and then fled away naked. Hence this narrative.[1]

And here we leave the King of love, the King of sorrows, our Master and Exemplar, dragged like any malefactor through the lanes in or around the city, in the dead of night. Did they taunt Him and jeer at Him on that dreadful journey towards His doom? Did they smite Him or spit on Him? They may well have done so, though it is not recorded: there was no historian, no disciple even, there to witness it, and if the Evangelists heard of such ill-usage later on they may easily, practising their usual reserve, have passed it by. Ah, I spoke a short time ago of our LORD'S "unknown sufferings"; how little of the horror of that night is known to us! And one remark must be made here respecting all these pains and indignities. He had experienced them, in part, beforehand, for He had endured them *in anticipation.* We are expressly told by St. John, with respect to this apprehension, that JESUS knew all things that would befall him.[2] That pain of foreknowledge we are spared, but He was not; the shadow of the cruci-

[1] If this story concerns the Evangelist himself, this consideration practically disposes of Weiss's objection that it is improbable and a myth.

[2] Chap. xviii. 4.

fixion must have darkened all His life. I believe I spoke of the Agony as the beginning of His travail We may call it, if we please, the beginning of the Passion; we may call it the vestibule of death, but He was a man of sorrows almost from His birth: of whatever knowledge He "emptied Himself," it is clear that He knew of His terrible fate all the way through. And this thought lends a fresh meaning to those familiar lines—

> "O generous love; that He who smote
> In Man for man the foe;
> The *double agony* in Man
> For man should undergo."

MEDITATION V

THE ARRAIGNMENT BEFORE ANNAS

I SUSPECT that it was past midnight when the band with its officers and its hangers-on, and with our Sacred LORD, His hands bound, in the midst, reached the house of Annas, for that they did go to Annas first, St. John's Gospel establishes beyond doubt. If we had only St. Matthew's Gospel to go by, we should conclude that they went straight to the house of Caiaphas.[1] But the beloved disciple, who wrote at a later date, and one of whose objects was seemingly to supply the omissions of the synoptic evangelists, tells us that our SAVIOUR'S first arraignment—it was a sort of preliminary and informal examination[2]—took place in the palace of Annas, and we can readily believe that it would be so. For though not *de facto* High Priest at this period—he had been deposed for exceeding his powers some

[1] Chap. xxvi. 57.

[2] That, no doubt, is the reason why the synoptists do not mention it.

years before—that capable and unscrupulous man contrived to exercise much of the influence and authority of the High Priest; apart from the Roman governor he was certainly the most powerful and conspicuous person in Jerusalem: whoever was in office, it was Annas that pulled the strings; he had done that for nearly half a century.[1] We have an account of him and his family in the pages of the Jewish historian Josephus, who informs us, among other things, that Ananus, as he calls him, had been High Priest himself, and, he adds, for a longer period than happened to any other High Priest of that age,[2] and that five of his sons in turn held the office, which, moreover (this the Evangelists tell us), was occupied at the time of the Crucifixion by his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas. So that, though he had lost his post, Annas had not lost the power; one solitary fact

[1] "The priestly authority was in reality entirely in the hands of Hanan . . . the order for the arrest probably came from him."—Renan.

[2] *Antiq.*, xx, ix, 1.—There were twenty-eight Chief Priests in one hundred and sixty years—the Emperor Tiberius said they pushed into office like flies alighting on a sore (Brodrick, p. 67). As Annas was only *de facto* High Priest for seven years, and Caiaphas retained the office for *seventeen*, it looks as if Josephus was in error in speaking of the duration of the former's rule, unless, as is not improbable, he held Ananus to be Chief Priest *de jure* all the time.

goes far to prove that, namely, that St. Luke[1] speaks of "the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas"[2] at a time when Caiaphas and not Annas held the appointment. And this unique influence he seems to have owed, not merely to his force of character, but to his great wealth, wealth which he had acquired partly as a usurer—he lent much money to the Romans—but still more as a trader, for he had stalls or booths, some it would seem on the Mount of Olives under the two cedars there, and some in the temple area, in the court of the Gentiles, which booths "monopolized the sale of all kinds of materials for sacrifice"[3]; "the booths of the sons of Annas," indeed, were quite an institution of that age. Whether he had contrived it we do not know, but in these same sheds or booths the meetings of the supreme Council, the Sanhedrim, were at this period for the most part held, an arrangement which would of course enhance his influence with that tribunal. Nor are we in any doubt as to the real character of the man and his

[1] Chap. iii. 2.

[2] The Jews held, on the authority of Numb. xxxv. 25, 28, that a man appointed Chief Priest remained such until death. So the band *may* have taken our LORD to Annas first, as High Priest *de jure*. "They considered Annas as their real High Priest."—Lange.

[3] Hastings, vol. i. p. 100*a*.

family; it was such that even the Talmud brands it with a curse: "Woe to the house of Annas!" And this is the man to whose abode they have just dragged our holy, patient, unresisting SAVIOUR!

And you will readily understand how to such a man and such a family our spotless CHRIST must have been an object of special detestation: Annas, indeed, had good reason to hate Him; for not only had JESUS held him up to scorn, to execration, as one who had made of the Father's house a den of robbers, but by His drastic measures—clearing out the sheep and the oxen, overturning the tables of the money-changers and the seats of them that sold doves—He had, perhaps on two separate occasions, interfered with this hoary sinner's evil gains. You may imagine the old priest's fury at these proceedings, and his passionate desire for revenge. I do not believe that in the whole city there was one person so concerned that our LORD should be silenced, or so eager for His death as this same Annas. And that being so, you may picture his anxiety for the success of this expedition. With what feverish impatience he would wait for the news whether they had taken CHRIST prisoner; he may have arranged that tidings of the capture should be sent to him at once; may have bargained that, the arrest made, they should hurry

the prisoner to his house. But even if that were not so, our LORD'S captors would be well aware what a joy it would be to Annas to have Him at his bar; yes, and they may have hoped for a large reward from him for having so successfully accomplished their mission. But, in any case, it was to the house of Annas that they straightway directed their steps, and, whatever the reason, it shows the power which the old priest wielded that it was to him and not to Caiaphas that in the first instance they conducted our REDEEMER. For it was really an invasion of the High Priest's and the Sanhedrim's prerogatives that *he*, Annas, should, apparently alone and unassisted, undertake this examination of our LORD.

However, he had no scruples on the point—he was too conscious of his power—and when, to his unbounded satisfaction, the SAVIOUR was brought before him, he forthwith interrogates our LORD as to His disciples and His teaching. Partly, I dare say to gratify his malice—he has some old scores to settle—partly in the hope that CHRIST would incriminate Himself or compromise His followers. But if so, he was foiled in his purpose; he is told that there was no need for this private examination, for CHRIST'S teaching had been public: "*I* have spoken openly to

the world;[1] *I* ever taught in synagogues and in the temple . . . Why askest thou Me? ask them that have heard Me"—and here, perhaps, He pointed to the officers and attendants—"behold, these know the things which I said." It may be that *some* of these same officers had been amongst those sent some time ago to take Him, and who returned saying, "Never man spake like this man."[2] "Ask them that have heard Me." Nothing could be more reasonable, but it conveyed a reproof to the wicked priest, and, I suspect, he winced under it. And it was a *public* reproof, and others saw that he had received a set-back. And so, perhaps to cover his master's confusion and at the same time to curry favour with him, one of his officers thereupon struck our LORD and King on the mouth: "He could only be answered by blows."[3] There is an old tradition, to which, however, we cannot attach much importance, that the man who dealt this cowardly stroke—all the more cowardly because CHRIST'S hands were bound and He could not retaliate, could not even defend Himself—was none other than Malchus, the man whose ear

[1] St. John xviii. 20. The "I" is emphatic; it may point a contrast between the way of Christ and that of Annas and his *entourage*.

[2] St. John vii. 46.

[3] Geikie.

CHRIST had healed.[1] But whoever it was, all he received in reply was the calm expostulation, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" What an example for us, His followers! What a contrast even to St. Paul's outburst against Ananias![2] "When He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," saith the Lord. I dare say the Psalmist's comfortable words came then into His mind: "Thou shalt answer for me, O LORD my GOD."

But a question may arise here which it would hardly be wise to leave unanswered: "Why does St. John," it may be asked, presuming that this took place in the house of Annas, "call him 'the High Priest,' when he of all men must have known that Annas was not strictly that?"—he tells us himself[3] that that year Caiaphas was High Priest. The answer is that that title was frequently bestowed on men

[1] It is hardly likely that either St. John or St. Peter *saw* this outrage. But they may easily have heard of it from some who *were* present, and who became disciples—perhaps from this man Malchus himself. Moreover, such a story would soon be bruited abroad; the disciples would never rest content till they had discovered what was done, and "in the loquacious East" such a thing would not long remain a secret.

[2] Acts xxiii. 3.

[3] Chap. xi. 19; xviii. 13.

who had served as Chief Priest; indeed, it was sometimes conceded to prominent members of their families and others—Sceva is so-called.[1] Such persons the historian Josephus calls "Chief Priests," and it need not therefore surprise us that St. John should do the same. And this usage, I may remark, explains the expression "the Chief *Priests*," so often found in the New Testament, when in reality there was but one. It means "the chief among the priests."

There was nothing more, it was evident to all, to be gained by any further unofficial examination of our LORD, so Annas presently "sent Him bound to Caiaphas."[2] But before we follow in His footsteps, there is one incident connected apparently with the house of Annas to which all the four Evangelists give much prominence, more, indeed, than to the sufferings of our LORD—the denials of Simon Peter—which may be considered here; we may consider it here, for its lessons are the same even if it took place later, in the house of Caiaphas. We have been already told that Peter and another disciple whom we may reasonably conclude to be

[1] Acts xix. 14.

[2] I can hardly believe that the Evangelist would have expressed himself thus had Annas and Caiaphas occupied the same house

St. John—no name is given—had followed our LORD, and that Peter followed at a distance, no doubt in fear and trembling. It is sometimes urged as a reproach against St. Peter that he "followed afar off." I think that it speaks volumes as to his fidelity and affection that he followed anyhow. For remember, first, that nine of the others apparently did not follow at all, and, secondly, that he was compromised as the others were not. All through CHRIST'S ministry he had been the most prominent figure among the twelve, and he had just assaulted one of the servants of the High Priest in the garden, and for that act of violence he might be apprehended, and that he could scarcely fail to know.[1] Still, whatever risk he runs, he cannot bring himself to desert his Master altogether, and the less so, as he believes in His power and perhaps counts on His release; his LORD has just struck some men down; He may presently strike them dead.[2] Follow, therefore, he must, though he follows at a distance; aye, and he follows, too, to the very palace of the Chief Priest—to the door! St.

[1] Weiss, p. 334, maintains that neither Peter nor John was in any great danger, because of the darkness and the confusion when the blow was struck. But they were well known to be disciples—even the portress knew it (St. John xviii. 17), and Peter had been recognized in the garden (ver. 26).

[2] M. Henry.

John, who seems to have kept close to Peter, enters the house: he was known to the Chief Priest[1] and probably to his servants also. Peter has no title to enter, or he may have attempted it and have been challenged and excluded. In any case, he lingers at the door; he would be as near to CHRIST as he could. St. John had probably passed in with the crowd "in the wake of the procession"[2] before he discovered that Peter was no longer at his side. But as soon as he saw how things stood, he went out and spake to the maid that kept the door, the portress, and brought in Peter.

[1] Keim, possessed with the unfortunate idea that the fourth Gospel is a *Tendenz-Schrift*, which labours to show the superiority of John to Peter, and is therefore unreliable, here asks three questions, to which I will venture a reply. 1. "In what way could John the Galilean be a private friend of the Sadducean High Priest?" I answer: The Gospel never says that he was a "private friend"—merely that he was "known." We cannot say *how* he came to be known, but we can conceive a score of ways. 2. How could "the disciples of an arrested man closely accompany" him, "as if all had not fled in Gethsemane?" Answer. Nothing is written about "closely accompanying," but the contrary. And the disciples having at first fled does not prevent a subsequent rally, on the part of two of the number. 3. How could St. John "have escaped suspicion of discipleship" when Peter did not? Answer: he did not escape—cf. ver. 17. "Art thou *also*," etc.: he was not worried as Peter was, because he had not shuffled as Peter did.

[2] Edersheim.

Now in the courtyard of that house,—whether it were the house of Annas or of Caiaphas or of both together—in the little court or quadrangle round which the building ran, the servants had lighted, perhaps in a portable brazier, a charcoal fire, for the night was cold,[1] and they collected round it. Peter asks himself what he should do. What would a man do in his circumstances? He would not dare to stand aloof from the rest, for that would excite suspicion: no, he must mingle with the crowd, he must seem as one of them. "His wisest plan, he thought, would be to mix amongst them as unconcernedly as possible."[2] So he joins the group round the fire; he sits among them (St. Luke xxii. 53) "to see the end"—remember, if you please, that he may have expected a speedy triumph for his Master—he sits there on the ground or on his haunches—chairs and divans there were none—and stretches out his hands and warms himself. But it was precisely this that led to his undoing, for as the fire-light fell upon his face, he was recognized—recognized at least by the girl who had watched the door. She probably had had her suspicions when Peter, at the request of

[1] Keim quotes a Rabbinical saying, *Finis hiemis gravior ipsa hieme.*

[2] Weiss, p. 336.

St. John, was admitted ; his furtive or uneasy manner may have suggested them, and now that she has a little leisure, after admitting the Sanhedrists, and joins the group and sees his face in the ruddy fire-light, she is sure : she has seen this man in our SAVIOUR'S company, in the temple or in the city. So she accuses him of being a disciple. Apparently, she spoke first to the company round the fire, saying "This man was with Him" : then she says to Simon, 'Thou also[1] wast with JESUS of Nazareth" or some equivalent words. For, let me say here, it is no easy task at the present day to discover who the different speakers on this occasion were and what were the precise words which they used, because the accounts of the four Evangelists differ considerably. They are all agreed that Peter was first accosted by a woman, one of the maid-servants of the Chief Priest. St. John adds that it was "the maid that kept the door"—but here their agreement practically ends. They differ as to the precise words which she addressed to Peter. According to St. Matthew, the words were, "Thou also wast with JESUS the Galilean" ; according to St. Mark, who no doubt derived his account from Peter himself, she said, "Thou also

[1] "Also" probably imports "Thou as well as John here." The word appears both in St. Matthew and St. John.

wast with the Nazarene, even JESUS"; according to St. John, who doubtless heard the words, and has reported them, "Art thou also one of this man's disciples"? The substance, you will observe, is the same, but the dress, the form and expression varies. They differ, again, as to Peter's reply. According to Matthew and Mark it was, "I know not what thou sayest"; according to St. Luke, "Woman, I know Him not"; according to St. John, "I am not"—not a disciple. But the divergencies are still more marked when we pass to the second charge and the second denial. They differ, or seem to differ, as to Peter's accusers. St. Mark says it was "the maid," *i.e.* the same maid, who accused him the second time; St. Matthew that it was "another maid"; St. Luke, that it was a man; St. John, more persons than one. Similarly, they differ as to the accusations. According to St. Mark the maid said to the bystanders, "This is one of them"; according to St. Matthew, a second maid said to them, "This man also was with JESUS the Nazarene"; whilst St. Luke tells us that a man said to Peter, "Thou art one of them"; St. John, that the bystanders asked him, "Art thou also one of His disciples?" And the differences are perhaps even still more pronounced in the case of the third denial, but into these we need not

now enter: enough has been said on this point for my present purpose. How do you account, I want to ask, for these discrepancies? Is it the case that the sacred and inspired writers contradict one another? To this I reply, first, that nothing short of a miracle could have ensured absolute unanimity on their part; they could not give us the exact details and the precise words without supernatural instruction and dictation at the time when they wrote, years after the events took place. For though two of the Evangelists were present at the time—I say two, for St. Mark's Gospel is practically St. Peter's—two were present and knew all the circumstances at the moment, and heard every word, neither of these two, even four and twenty hours later, could have written down an absolutely exact account of the proceedings, still less have recalled the precise words of the different speakers. They could not have done it, if only because of the excitement and dread which possessed them at the time—possessed them *both*, for St. John would be almost as distressed and tortured and bewildered as St. Peter was. Men in such agony, men on the rack, fearing for their very lives, it was utterly beyond them to retain in their memories all these *minutiae;* even ten minutes afterwards,[1] though they might be positive

[1] "It is evident that neither John nor he can have retained a

that something was said about Galilee, or about Nazareth, they might still be uncertain whether it was "JESUS the Galilean" or "JESUS of Nazareth" that the maid had said. Both again might be abundantly clear that she had taxed Peter with being one of CHRIST'S followers, without being at all certain whether she had said, straight out, "Thou also wast with Him"; or had asked the question, "Art thou not one of His disciples?" We must remember, too, that they did not then know the place which these words or that occasion would occupy in history, and so they had no motive at the time for preserving their exact form; moreover, they may well have thought the *exact* form of no great moment. Anyhow, when they came to write their Gospels they had only their memories to trust to, and what they would remember is *precisely what they have given us*—the *substance* of what was said and done. But perhaps you think that the inspiration which they enjoyed would enable them to recall the *ipsissima verba* of the different speakers. But they lay no claim to such verbal inspiration—rather the contrary; St. Luke tells us that he compiled his Gospel from the accounts of eye-witnesses,

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distinct recollection of the particular incidents. . . . Notwithstanding, the principal incidents can be gathered with sufficient clearness from their narratives."—Weiss, pp. 335–6.

and, moreover, inspiration as to such details was never promised them. Our SAVIOUR did say that the HOLY SPIRIT should bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever *He* had said unto them, but that promise did not extend to what they or others said and did; in such matters they were left to their memories. Nor have these memories betrayed them: no unprejudiced person can doubt that we have here an honest and veracious record; the things happened as here described; the four Evangelists are in practical agreement; the divergencies are much more apparent than real. Do you say that St. Mark, who affirms that it was the same maid, is at issue with St. Matthew, who says it was another maid? But that is not so, for two maids may have made the same charges about the same time; St. John says there were more speakers than one. Or do you object that it cannot have been two maids, and yet a man, or a number of men? That, again, is to overlook the fact that the maids spoke to the *men*, to the bystanders (and here we have a natural touch; it was for the men, they thought, to take action), and some of these men thereupon spoke to Simon Peter—several may have spoken, and one may have been especially prominent and aggressive, which would account for Peter's addressing his reply to that one. And suppose that we cannot reconcile

these discrepancies—what then? Why, that the main, the essential features of the story are clear and indisputable. The four writers are agreed, so far as their narratives go, that it was Peter that denied his LORD and Master; that there were three denials; that he was first recognized by a maid-servant; that it was his standing in the fire-light that betrayed him; that he was charged with being CHRIST'S disciple, and that he protested that he was not; and, finally, that on the third occasion his dialect was alleged as showing that he was a Galilean—"the Galilean dialect was so coarse . . . that the Galileans were not suffered to read in the Jewish synagogues."[1] What more could you have? But you have something more: you have this—that the lessons of this sad story are just as certain and as manifest as if there were no variations at all in the Gospels. It is certain that it was Peter, the leader, the spokesman, the *coryphaeus* of the twelve, that denied the Redeemer of mankind, and you see at once how that fact would add to CHRIST'S humiliation; you see something more of the "cup" that He had to drink. It is also certain that the man who denied was the very man who had vowed beyond the rest and had been warned, above the rest, and you learn the danger of over-confidence;

[1] Lange.

you have a lesson as to your own weakness; the message comes to you, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." It is certain too that this Simon Peter, who quailed and fell before a woman, a few weeks later, when the HOLY GHOST had been given, was as bold as a lion and as steadfast as a rock, and heard unmoved the threats of the Sanhedrim, and so you see how we depend for aid and strength upon the Holy Spirit of GOD. It is certain, again, that on this occasion one woman or two women did speak against our Blessed LORD, and you remember that this is the only record we have of any woman who took part against Him, and thus you recognize in women "the pillars of His Church." It is certain, too, that Peter in his denials proceeded from bad to worse; at first it was, "I know not what thou sayest"; he only shuffled; then he denied with an oath, and in the end "he began to curse and to swear, I know not the man," and so you are reminded that the descent to Avernus, to hell, is easy; that sin acquires force as it proceeds; that "it was easier not to *commit* than not to *repeat* his error," and that when we tell one lie we have to tell twenty more to bury it, and you further see in what misery and shame one false step involved this elect apostle. And it is certain, finally, that only our LORD'S prayer for Peter saved

him from utter shipwreck and apostasy,[1] and so we are taught and constrained to cry—

"In the hour of trial,
JESU, pray for me;
Lest, by base denial,
I depart from Thee;
If Thou see'st me waver,
With a look recall,
Nor for fear or favour
Suffer me to fall."

But this brings me to Simon Peter's repentance, for his repentance is for our imitation no less than his fall is for our admonition. He had added cruelty to injury. For whilst he was protesting that he did not know his Gracious Master, that Master was at the same moment enduring "the contradiction of sinners against Himself." In the house of Annas He was struck upon the mouth, but Peter's words wounded His heart—"a blow with a word strikes deeper than a blow with a sword."[2] But though Peter had forsaken his LORD, CHRIST had not forgotten him, and as He heard the oaths and curses, He turned and looked on him. When or where this was done we have no

[1] I am not quite so sure as Weiss is that Peter's faith never wavered for a single moment: that he merely "did not realize what he was doing."

[2] Whichcote.

means of knowing—St. Luke alone records it and he gives us no details; probably he had none to give, save that, just before, the cock had crowed. And that sound and that look recalled Simon Peter to himself: conscience awoke; he saw what he had done: he was filled with compunction: he was broken down: he went out—out of the building (he had already gone out into the porch)—and wept bitterly; he went out into the night, but it was to meet the dawn,[1] the sunrise of repentance. And a legend records that ever thereafter, all through his life, when he heard the cock crow, he would fall on his knees and weep and beg forgiveness for his sin.

But it is time that we turned back from this unfaithful disciple to our King "in His solitude and sufferings." The examination ended—such as it was; it effected nothing save that it added to the sum of our LORD'S sorrows—"Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas." They had bound our SAVIOUR when they apprehended Him, and we have no reason to think that those bonds had been altogether loosed. No, but they may well have been somewhat relaxed during the examination, and they must now, therefore, be made more secure. In any case, as He had arrived so He departs, bound. St. Paul, you will

[1] Lange.

remember, writing from his prison, says to the Colossians, "Remember my bonds." Christians, remember your Holy SAVIOUR'S bonds! It is the Word made flesh, the very and Eternal GOD, the LORD of the spheres, that is bound! Why did He not burst those bonds asunder? *He could not do it*: for our sakes He could not. He was bound, says one, with a stronger cord than these fetters furnished, even with the cords of love. The servants bound Him, but the sacrifice had already bound Himself to the horns of the altar.[1] He was content to be bound, that we might go free. As by His stripes we are healed, so by His bonds are we liberated. Let us give glory and praise to the Son of Man and Son of GOD that for our salvation He condescended to be bound; for us He appeared as a captive, as a criminal, as a felon among men. Behold how He loved us!

[1] M. Henry.

MEDITATION VI

THE TRIAL BEFORE CAIAPHAS AND THE COUNCIL

WE may speculate, if we will, as to how the news of our LORD'S arrest reached the Chief Priest Caiaphas. Did Annas send him word, or did some ready messenger, some Cushi of the period, hurry to his house with the tidings, or did he first learn of it from the noise of the approaching band? And were any of the Council waiting with him under his roof, on the chance that the expedition might effect a capture, in which case their services would be required, for He must be put on His trial without delay? All this is uncertain, but one thing we may be sure of, that the news, however it arrived, caused great joy throughout the palace: we may be sure, too, that if a quorum of twenty-three was not present no time would be lost in securing one. You must not fail to notice the extreme hurry which marks all these proceedings: our LORD'S condemnation and

execution were all *rushed.* Nor were the authorities at all ill-advised in rushing them; they had reason to fear either a rally on the part of His disciples or even a rescue on the part of the people; I imagine that they were filled with apprehensions and wanted to get the thing through with all possible speed—"to end the affair at a stroke."[1] That is why our SAVIOUR'S trial was held forthwith, even in the dead of night, which was directly contrary to all law and custom; they could not afford to wait; delay was dangerous. It would seem as if the Sanhedrim, the entire Council, which claimed authority in all questions of doctrine, did not meet officially until the morning broke,[2] but our Lord had been already condemned at a preliminary trial, perhaps a "packed meeting" of certain members held apparently in the house of Caiaphas—the Sanhedrim at that time met in "the sheds" or booths; that preliminary trial paved the way for His formal condemnation; there the evidence was collected and there the charges were made; there, too, it was decided that He should die; so that the full Sanhedrim, when it met in formal session, had little more to do than to register this decision, and the less so, as presumably the leaders of the tribunal, all the men of influence who could be

[1] Weiss. [2] St. Luke xxii. 66.

got together, were present at the earlier arraignment. They could hardly hope for all the Seventy at that hour of the night, but Caiaphas apparently collected as many as he could, or as many as he could depend on. And their first thought, after exchanging congratulations among themselves on the capture, was —false witness; some of the Evangelists tell us that they deliberately "*sought* false witness"[1] against our LORD to put Him to death: His death, that is to say, as a *Mésith*,[2] or seducer of the people, was resolved on, and it was by false charges that it was to be justified. And here I must point out what a powerful engine the Jewish law of witness afforded to unscrupulous men. Some of you may have wondered why the words, "Thou shalt not bear false witness" are found in the decalogue side by side with denunciations of murder and adultery; it is because every man's life was at the mercy of false testimony. It only needed two or three men to accuse him of blasphemy, as in the case of Naboth and Stephen, or of unchastity, as in the case of Susanna, and he might forthwith be stoned to death. "At the mouth of two or three witnesses" almost any crime might be proven. And "when a Naboth had to die, there were

[1] ἐζήτουν, Imperf. They sought it continuously.
[2] See Deut. xiii. 1–11.

always sons of Belial to denounce him."[1] You see what a weapon our LORD'S enemies had in their hands, and they were not slow to use it. "*False* witness!" Do you observe the compliment which they paid unwittingly to our REDEEMER? They knew that true witness would profit them nothing: that would show that He had done nothing amiss. And here I may remind you that He is called "the *faithful* witness." Did they bear false witness against Him? "He abideth faithful," and His witness against His murderers will be faithful too. Ah, there were many "false witnesses" that rose up against Him then! It has been assumed by some writers that they were bribed, but I do not think bribery would be necessary; the hatred felt for our LORD would be a sufficient incentive. I wonder what sort of accusations they brought against the unspotted CHRIST. We are not told: we are left to conjecture, because, whatever they were, "their testimonies did not agree together." But we are told of two who perverted some of His words spoken years before, at the beginning of His ministry. He had said, speaking of His own sacred body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." *They* were to destroy it; *He* was to restore it. Now they accuse Him of saying, "I will destroy the temple of God," that

[1] M. Henry.

temple which was so dear to every Jew. You remember the poet's words, "A lie which is half the truth is ever the blackest of lies." But though there was a grain of truth in it, that charge did not serve their turn: even "their witness agreed not together."[1] The only discrepancy that we can trace is that, according to the one His words were, "I am able to destroy," and according to the other, "I will destroy." It does not seem to us a very great difference, but it may well have been that the Jewish law, considering the power lodged in the hands of the witnesses, required absolute agreement. So they were foiled of their purpose; the engine they had invoked profited them nothing: "the Lord looked on in silence whilst the devices of his opponents came to nothing."[2] What is to be done? One hope remained to them: He may be induced to incriminate Himself; His own mouth may condemn Him. So the High Priest, after vainly asking why his prisoner answered nothing—He might well keep silence at a trial where all law and equity were set at nought,[3]—arose and "stood in

[1] It has been suggested that the evidence broke down under a cross-examination on the part of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. But there is nothing about this in the text, and it is very doubtful whether either of the two was present.

[2] Lange.

[3] Keim is much impressed by this silence: "JESUS," he say

the midst"—the members of the Council sate in a semi-circle, at either end of which was a scribe, to record the proceedings; he stalked towards the centre, at which point our SAVIOUR stood;[1] the mere action shows that something new and special is to be attempted, and addressed to his prisoner a solemn appeal. "I adjure thee by the living God," he cries, "that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of the Blessed." And to that appeal our SAVIOUR could not turn a deaf ear. For, in the first place, it was made in the name of GOD, and, secondly, it was made by the minister of GOD, the acting High Priest. And here I think it well to remind you that High Priest and officer of GOD this man Caiaphas was, notwithstanding his character and the manner of his appointment. There are those, as I have already

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p 49, "was more royal in His silence than when He answered. . . . He looked down upon and despised [?] His foes: He was willing to let falsehood and violence take their course."

[1] Renan sets aside this account of the Chief Priest's adjuration and of our LORD'S reply, and it is instructive to notice on what ground he does it. It is because "the courage of JESUS who had resolved to die renders this narrative superfluous." But if so, why is not the whole narrative superfluous? True, "He did not undertake a useless defence," but He may have esteemed Himself bound to proclaim His Messiahship before the Council, and the more so as that confession resulted in His condemnation.

observed, who think that GOD'S ministers must needs be good men, or that they cease to be His ministers, if they become false or wicked. That is not the teaching of Scripture, as I showed you in the case of Judas Iscariot. Now I remind you that Caiaphas, too, contradicts that view. We know what his character was like; he was the chief instrument in the crucifixion of our guiltless LORD. And we know, too, that he owed his place and office to a pagan power, to the Roman governor, and it may be, moreover, that he had bought his appointment with money—such things were done in those days. But all this notwithstanding, he was GOD'S High Priest: he was that when he decreed our SAVIOUR'S death. As High Priest he had "prophesied";[1] however corrupt he was and however scandalous his appointment, he had still some special gifts and properties. And as High Priest, our SAVIOUR, the Infinite Wisdom, recognizes him and responds to his appeal, and so He teaches us that men are not GOD'S ministers because they are good or clever, or successful, but because they have been appointed such. And this teaching of our LORD was echoed and confirmed at a later day by St. Paul, who apologizes for reviling Ananias; had he known he was GOD'S High Priest he would

[1] St. John xi. 49.

not have done it.[1] Do not, therefore, I pray you, scoff at orders; do not say that, as long as a preacher is a good and able man, it makes no difference whether he has been duly appointed or not. You cannot take that ground without contradicting, flatly contradicting, the rule of Holy Scripture, the law of your LORD and His apostles.

But I must now ask you to observe that our LORD'S response to the High Priest's adjuration sealed His doom, humanly speaking, and He knew that it would do so when He pronounced the words. He has been asked, in GOD'S name, to say whether He is the CHRIST, the Messiah and the Son of the Blessed. He straightway replies that He is,[2] and He adds, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man"—notice how He harps upon that name, and well He might, for it is His and our highest distinction; it speaks to us of the Incarnation; it reminds us how "the Son of God became the Son of Man that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God." "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven"—we may remember here that "every eye shall see Him."

[1] Acts xxiii. 5.

[2] "Thou hast said" (St. Matt. xxvi. 64) is obviously the equivalent of "I am" (St. Mark xiv. 62).

There is no mistaking these words; the Council could not misunderstand them; He claimed to be the CHRIST and He claimed to be Divine. "The right hand of power"; why, that would carry their thoughts to the 110th Psalm: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand." "Coming on the clouds of heaven"—that would refer them to the prophecy of Daniel, "There came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of days . . . and there was given Him dominion and glory and a kingdom . . . His dominion is an everlasting dominion . . . and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."[1] No, He leaves them in no doubt, though that confession will cost Him His life.[2] Time was when He did not assert His claims; the hour was not yet come, but it has come now. He cannot leave the world without testifying, and to the authorities of the Jewish Church, that He is LORD and CHRIST. They must know what they are doing. If He had held His peace, as He did before and after, He might have foiled them, might have "escaped as

[1] Dan. vii. 13.

[2] "On a former occasion, when JESUS could have won a King's crown thereby, He had rejected the proffered title of Messiah; now, when He knew that such an acknowledgement was equivalent to signing His own death warrant, He . . . declares that He is the Messiah."—Weiss.

a bird out of the snare of the fowler," but that He may not do; He *is* the CHRIST of GOD and He must tell them so. I do not wonder that Caiaphas rent his clothes in horror, for these words would seem to him and to the rest rank blasphemy; you must remember that they did not, would not believe in Him; had they done so, they could never have crucified Him: he rent his clothes, that miserable priest in his zeal for the LORD of hosts—for once he was sincere—and cried, "He hath spoken blasphemy": He being a man has made Himself GOD. "What think ye?" He knew, of course, what they would think. "They all condemned Him to be deserving of death."[1] He had chosen the blasphemer's part; He must die the blasphemer's death.

Did you observe that word "all," which is found in St. Mark's account? "They *all* condemned Him to be guilty of death." Averse as the Jews were to capital punishment, they were eager for it here. It was an axiom that the Sanhedrim was to save life; you see how bent they are on destroying it. Not one voice is raised in protest; none said a word in His behalf: had any one done so, we should doubtless

[1] They would probably pronounce Him *Ish Maveth*, a man doomed to die. This, however, was not the *formal* sentence of death.

have heard of it. Where, then, was Nicodemus and where was Joseph of Arimathea?[1] Is it possible that they were present—that they were present and yet afraid to speak? Alas, that is quite possible, so weak are most men in the presence of a majority. We cannot, however, be sure that this was so. It may be that their sympathies were well known and that on that account they had not been summoned. But be that as it may, the fact remains; there was not one dissenting voice. We are told, indeed, that Joseph "had not consented to their deed," but we are not told that he dissented or protested. They were apparently unanimous in condemning the LORD Who made them, and Who will judge them, to die as a blasphemer.

And their decision pronounced, what a scene follows! "They that held JESUS"—so you see He was held in their rude grip all the time—"mocked Him"; He is subjected to the most shameful indignities, and this though every prisoner is under the protection of the law. Emboldened by His apparent helplessness, these minions of the priests heap every

[1] Weiss, p. 338, suggests that they may have withdrawn from the Council "in order not to stain themselves further with the guilt of their colleagues"; Renan says that they "were absent or did not vote."

sort of insult upon Him. He "endured what is worse than pain and torture to a man of honour."[1] I should not wonder if, at first, remembering His mighty works, which they ascribed to magic, or to Satanic help, they were somewhat afraid of Him. But as the night wore on, and He remained passive and powerless, their confidence increased, and after the sentence of death they are no longer afraid. The first thing, it would seem, that they did, was to spit on Him—"in His face," St. John says, and Isaiah says that the LORD'S servant "hid not His face from shame and spitting."[2] That is what Orientals would do; that is how, to this day, they testify abhorrence and detestation. Think of it, Christians for whom He died! And this is the Lover of souls, this is the Infinite Goodness, Whose face is covered with their foul saliva, and, remember, His hands are held, so that He cannot wipe it away. From this beginning it was but a short step to smite Him; some, it would seem, with their clenched fists, some with the palms of their hands, some with their rods. They "smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek."[3] Did

[1] Weiss. [2] Isa. l. 6.

[3] Micah v. 1. Both St. Mark and St. John use the word ῥαπίσματα, and this is the word employed by the LXX in Isa. l. 6, "I gave My . . . cheeks" (lit. jawbones), εἰς ῥαπίσματα. Tissot gives us a highly realistic touch: "The air is heavy with

they bruise His blessed face? Did they disfigure it? I can well believe it. The prophet tells us that "His visage was marred." Then an idea occurs to them. He has just claimed to be the CHRIST; ah, they will test His powers! So they cover His face, so that He cannot see His assailants, and then they smite Him again, whilst they cry, "Prophesy, thou Messiah; who is he that smote Thee?"—so did they "gape upon Him with their mouth as a ravening and a roaring lion."[1] Nor was it only a coarse foul cloth or His poor raiment that at that moment darkened His vision; you remember the Psalmist's words, "*Shame* hath covered My face." Oh, what must the angels have thought of it, if they knew what was passing—and those angels who had sung of peace and goodwill! And this mockery that is recorded is but a sample of other insults which are not recorded. "Many other things," says St. Luke, "spake they against Him, reviling Him." And all this time,[2] I imagine, He was faint for lack of food, His "knees were weak through

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the smoke from the lamps and the emanations from the frenzied crowd."

[1] Ps. xxii. 13.

[2] "He remained for the rest of the night exposed to the ill-treatment of an infamous pack of servants, who spared Him no indignity."—Renan.

fasting." No, there was never sorrow and there was never shame like His. Your King, the King of the universe, was derided and befooled by the lowest of the people; derided and befooled, too, in the name of pure religion.

It has often been supposed that this brutality, this savagery, only took place after the Chief Priest and the Council had retired; it has been thought impossible that they could have sanctioned it. But I am by no means clear that that was the case; I can quite believe that they witnessed it and made no attempt to check it. I dare say that some who remembered how He had held them up to reprobation, and had denounced their evil deeds, and had called them "vipers" and "serpents" and "hypocrites," felt that now He was only receiving His due.

And what was the King of Glory thinking of all the time? Was it of vengeance?—was it of the day when the tables would be turned? Not so! We know what thoughts, what hopes sustained Him. "For the joy that was set before Him . . . He endured the shame." It is "of mercy and not of judgement" that His heart is full. His shame shall turn to our salvation; He foresees the fruit of His soul's travail and is satisfied. Let them do their worst: they know not what they do. But He knows. They

are fulfilling "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of GOD," and He, through their instrumentality, is bringing many sons to glory.

So far I have assumed that all these proceedings took place by night, and not at a meeting of the whole Council, but at a preliminary trial at which many of the members of the Sanhedrim were present But if that was the case, then there must have been another and a full and formal session of that same Sanhedrim, when that day broke, for three Evangelists tells us that it *did* meet in the early morning.[1] And I confess to you that so artless, so unstudied, so vague are the accounts of these proceedings in the Gospels, that I find it impossible to be sure on this point. I have already admitted that it is uncertain whether the denials of St. Peter took place in the house of Annas or in that of Caiaphas; I now add that it is equally uncertain whether there were one or two meetings of the Council; it may be that, after the arraignment before Annas, our SAVIOUR, securely bound, was guarded all through the night, and only put upon His trial when the day dawned. And you

[1] "In those countries where a considerable suspension of work is necessary at midday, business begins earlier than with us, and the rulers had every inducement to hurry the matter."—Weiss.

may be tempted to think that all this uncertainty impairs the value of the narrative. But that is not so; it makes little or no difference; the import, the lessons are the same. It does not concern us to know the precise place where Simon was tempted and fell: the thing for us to know and remember is that he *did* fall and did repent. So again with our LORD'S examination. We know that He *was* arraigned before Annas and before Caiaphas and the Council, and we know *how* He bore Himself, and the charges that were brought against Him, and the indignities that He endured, but it adds nothing to our profit to know whether He was brought before the Council once or twice, or whether this or that was done or said at the first trial or the second, or whether the Rabbinical rules in capital cases were observed or were grossly violated.[1] It was not the way of the sacred writers

[1] Edersheim, Brodrick, and other writers refer to the Talmudic regulations—which are fair enough and even generous and merciful—as if they must have been in force in our LORD'S day, and, consequently, they have no difficulty in showing that every rule was trampled on. But it is much more likely that these rules appeared at a later date in the Talmud, because the Jews were themselves so ashamed of the proceedings. "Concerning these forms, we have very insufficient information, and the inferences from . . . the Talmud . . . are thoroughly unreliable. Besides, the case was unique, and was not met by existing laws."—Weiss, p. 339.

to be precise on such matters as these; they were not skilled historians: had the Gospels been exact and methodical, it might have aroused our suspicions: what they have given us is such a story as men of their stamp naturally would give. I have therefore no hesitation in confessing to you that we are not, and perhaps never shall be, certain as to the exact sequence of events in this awful tragedy; more than that, some of the writers themselves may have been uncertain. But what of that? These events did happen—that is beyond all question—and the narratives as they stand instruct us just as much as if they were exact and systematic.

I assume, then, that after the proceedings already described the Council met—probably in the *Beth Din* or Council Hall—if only to register and renew the decisions of the former meeting; the entire body must ratify a sentence of death. And if so, we must believe that though its session cannot have lasted long (for it was still early morning when they appeared before Pilate), our LORD was arraigned before it and questioned and condemned. But, indeed, that meeting in the morning had other work to do. They had their prisoner, and they had sentenced Him to death, but what were they to do with Him? how was the sentence to be carried out? The punishment which the Mosaic

law awarded to the blasphemer and the heretic was death by stoning,[1] but stoning was out of the question at the time of the feast and under the eyes of the Roman governor; they could not face a tumult of the people nor could they brook the Roman displeasure; besides, they wanted to fix the odium of the crime upon others. What are they to do? Only one thing is possible: they must deliver Him over to the secular arm; they must induce Pilate to put Him to death. It was partly to settle this point, I imagine, that the "consultation" of which St. Mark speaks was held. Anyhow, the result of that consultation was that they bound our SAVIOUR—bound Him *again*—and carried Him away—dragged Him, perhaps, like a beast of burden, with a halter round His neck, from the place where they had met (not necessarily the house of Caiaphas) to the Praetorium, the palace of the Roman governor—not a special building, but the place, wherever it might be, where the governor resided. And there for the present we will leave the world's King, awaiting the governor's pleasure.

We must, however, before we close, follow the fate

[1] Levit. xxiv. 16; Deut. xiii. 1–12. Renan is not justified, therefore, in saying, "The course which the priests had resolved to take was *quite in conformity* with established law."

of one of the actors in this world-drama, the traitor Judas. I have no doubt that he had been in or near the High Priest's Court all the night: he could hardly slink away, much as he may have desired to do so; his testimony might be required. He would therefore, in all probability, see his Gracious Master arraigned, abused and adjudged to die; he would see or hear of this, and would realize that it was his doing. When he saw that our SAVIOUR was condemned—that expression almost suggests that he had expected that CHRIST would deliver Himself, as He had done before, and it favours the view, taken by some, that Judas proceeded to this extremity, this betrayal, not for the mere gain of money, and for such a paltry sum of money, too, but in order to force his Master to declare Himself[1]—"when he saw that He was condemned," he "repented himself": he was filled with compunction and dismay; he will do what he can to repair his fault; perhaps he hopes it may not be altogether too late. So he brings again the thirty

[1] It is difficult to believe, however, that if this was Judas's motive, our LORD could have called him a "devil" and the "son of perdition." I suggest that he resolved on the betrayal, not for the mere gain of money, but also because of the painful consciousness that CHRIST saw through him and distrusted him, and, above all, because the stern morality of the Gospel was really hateful to him. His was "the carnal mind," which is enmity with GOD.

pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and elders, and tells them that he has committed a deadly sin, he has "betrayed the innocent blood." He can hardly have expected that his confession would make much difference, though a drowning man grasps at a straw, but if he did, he was soon undeceived: it is cold comfort that we get from our partners in sin. But I suspect that even he was shocked at their brutal indifference. "You tell us," they say, "that you have sinned: well, that is your look-out; what is that to us? You have served us as a useful tool and you have had your price, and must take the consequences. See thou to that." Ah, there is no place for repentance, though he sought it with tears. Not a grain of mercy or relenting can he expect from them! What is he to do? He has the money with him, and they will not take it. At any rate, he will not keep it; it is blood money: it burns his hands. So he turns from them—perhaps he had interviewed them in the temple courts, in the sheds or the schools, and he rushes, in his misery and frenzy, into the court of the priests. He has no right to be there, and but for his furious haste he would have been apprehended. It may be the priests were then preparing for the morning sacrifice, but, if so, he passes them, and passes, too, the great brazen altar till he

stands opposite the temple porch, with its doors open. Then, steadfast to his purpose, without a moment's delay, he takes the cursed money, the thirty pieces, possibly in a bag: possibly in *the* bag which he had so long carried, and hurls it right into the sanctuary.[1] That money was defiled, and he knew it and the priests knew it. (Observe, they could see the stain of blood on the shekels, but not on their own souls.[2]) Then so much the better for his purpose: if it defiles the holy place, he will have his revenge; the men who would not listen to him shall at least remember him; they shall know that he spurns both them and their bribes. And then he leaves the court as abruptly as he entered it: leaves it before any steps could be taken, and departs—literally, "he went into solitude";[3] he rushes out of the city and probably across the valley and hangs himself;[4] hangs himself, some have thought, at the very hour when his Master died on the cross. "So perish all and every one that dares such deeds as he." But "O the pity of it"—that CHRIST'S chosen apostle should come to such an end." He being dead, yet speaketh, and he speaks *by* his death."

[1] Ρίψας . . . ἐν τῷ ναῷ. [2] Geikie. [3] ἀνεχώρησεν.
[4] It was afterwards related that he "fell asunder," etc.—Weiss, p. 344.

MEDITATION VII

THE ARRAIGNMENTS BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD

CONDEMNED by the Sanhedrim to death—and condemned as a *blasphemer!*—that is the position in which we left our Sacred LORD and MASTER at the close of our last meditation.

Do you realize what this means? It means that the King of Glory, the Prince of Life, the Lord of all, was doomed to death by the judicial decrees of the Jewish Church, acting synodically, acting through its Chief Priests and its Council.[1] It was the Church of GOD that delivered the Son of GOD to die. For that Jewish commonwealth was GOD'S institution, His Church, His society for the instruction and salvation of mankind; He had founded it, reared it, ruled it, used it, and there was no other; (salvation, our SAVIOUR Himself taught us, was "of the Jews"),

[1] Jost, quoted by Edersheim, calls it a *privat-Mord*, and Edersheim contends that there was no formal meeting of the Sanhedrim. I hold this position to be utterly untenable.

and it acted, it legislated through its Council—that was "the Church by representation." But how did it accomplish the beneficent purpose of the ALMIGHTY? It accomplished it by ordaining and compassing the death of its Master and King. I repeat: it was the Church or community of GOD, acting through its tribunals and its officers, that murdered the Holy One of GOD.

And herein is food for reflection; herein are two lessons at least, very necessary for these times. The first is that the whole Church, and every local Church or part thereof, though its builder and maker is GOD, and though it exists to do the work of GOD and is His chosen, if not His only instrument for doing that work, is nevertheless composed of men, of sinful and wilful men, and therefore always has been and always will be more or less misguided and corrupt and rebellious. I think it well to say this because those Christians are many who contend that the "Church of the Living GOD" must needs be a pure Church: it cannot be corrupted: they say that it is "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." They even talk of an infallible Church! It is enough to reply that no such Church has ever existed in the world. Any one who reads the Old Testament will see how immoral and idolatrous was the community of the first

dispensation, the Church before CHRIST; any one who reads the Acts and Epistles will observe that the Church after CHRIST was not so very much better, whilst from the Gospels we learn that the Church of GOD, when the adorable CHRIST was arraigned at its bar, condemned Him to die as a blasphemer. That is what the great society of GOD has done in its day!

And the second lesson is this—that this corrupt society remains GOD'S Church in spite of its corruptions and its sins. The separatists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contended that the Church of England had ceased to be a Church and had become a synagogue of Satan by reason of its abuses. But whatever that Church did or was, it was never worse than the Jewish Church; whatever its crimes, it never crucified the LORD of Glory. And yet GOD'S Church it was, that Jewish race, and such it continued to be; our LORD lived and died in its communion: He kept its feasts, discharged its duties, recognized its officers, and though it had killed their Master, the apostles did the same: they were continually in the temple; they frequented the synagogues, and St. Paul tells us expressly that "GOD hath not cast away His people whom He did foreknow." Once a Church, it would seem, always a Church, for "the gifts and calling of GOD are without repentance."

But to return. The Sanhedrim has adjudged our King to death, but it has no power to execute the sentence—"the Chief Priests and elders could only show their teeth"[1]—for the power of life and death had been taken away from them some years before:[2] you will find them presently complaining to Pilate, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." If, therefore, the CHRIST is to die it must be by other hands than theirs; the governor must decree it. That is why we read that "the whole multitude of them"—that is to say, the Council in a body—arose, and having bound Him afresh, led Him away (this would be about 6 a.m.), and "delivered Him up to Pontius Pilate." So our SAVIOUR'S mournful prophecy[3] is fulfilled; He is given up into the hands of the Gentiles, He who was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel! And what a gross dishonour was this to Him: it was His own people who not merely renounced Him, but persuaded the Pagan power to crucify Him. Did you notice, again, the mention of "the multitude"? By a multitude He was apprehended; by a multitude he is delivered to death. This does not say much for majorities; it

[1] M. Henry.

[2] They lost the *jus gladii* on the death of Archelaus, when Judea became a Roman province.

[3] Mark x. 33; Luke viii. 32.

is not from CHRIST'S life that we learn that the *vox populi* is the *vox Dei.* Consider, too, the fresh reference to His bonds. He had been bound in the Garden and "Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas," and now they bind Him anew; it is probable that during the arraignments the cords or fetters had been somewhat relaxed; now, however, as He is to march through the city, they are tightened and made secure. I will also ask you to observe the words, "They *led* him away," for they favour the idea that He was attached by ropes or chains, possibly by a halter round the neck, to some of those who guarded and conducted Him. And whither do they drag Him? It is to the Praetorium or palace of the Roman Governor—"the Saviour of Jews and Gentiles must be judged by Jews and Gentiles."[1] So it is from a palace, "the palace of the High Priest," to a palace, for Pilate would seem to have occupied when in Jerusalem the palace of Herod.[2] Ah, it was the first time that the Son of Man was admitted into palaces—He had not associated with princes, but with publicans and sinners—but He only crosses the threshold as a prisoner: they would not have

[1] M. Henry.

[2] Sanday, p. 52, holds it proved that "our LORD's condemnation took place in front of Herod's palace, the outer fortifications of which still survive by the Jaffa Gate."

received Him, "there was no room for Him" in any other capacity. And now, mark the scruples of His murderers! They have none about doing a righteous man to death, but they are much too pious to enter the judgement-hall: that was a heathen domicile; it would defile them to pass its portals, and especially now, when it was Passover-time and there might be leaven in the place. What a straining at a gnat whilst they swallowed a camel! They draw a line at leaven, whilst they are wild for blood! But I fear such contrasts are not peculiar to the Jews' religion. Ivan the Terrible, Tsar of Russia, would have thought it a profanation to eat a morsel of flesh during Lent, but his cruelties and murders went on just the same. Nor need we go to other lands or former days for our examples; we may have furnished an example ourselves; are not some of us, for instance, more particular about fasting communion than the fast from sin and wickedness, or have we strict rules for the Sunday and just please ourselves through the week? Anyhow, they would not enter the Praetorium lest they should be defiled—they shrank from leaven, but not from taking life—and so Pilate, no doubt inwardly mocking at their scruples, went forth [1]

[1] Whilst Keim accounts this concession as incredible, as being beneath the dignity of a procurator, Ellicott sees in it a "ready

to speak with them. He sees at once, if he did not know already, that they have brought some one before him for judgement, so he asks, naturally enough, "What accusation bring ye against this man?" What is He charged with?[1] But that was just what they found it so difficult to say; well they might find it difficult, after His ministry of mercy and purity. If they had spoken the truth they would have said that really He was accused of having flouted their authority and of having denounced their evil deeds. So they seek to evade the point. Pilate may well assume His guilt, may take their word for it. "If he were not a malefactor," they reply, "we would not have delivered Him up unto thee"; they have their own tribunals, and Pilate ought to confirm and execute their decisions! But the procurator is not so sure of that: he knew them better than they knew themselves; he suspects that it is a case of envy and malice; he may have heard much, as governor, of

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political tact." The latter view is, I have no doubt, the true one. Weiss, p. 348, observes, most justly, that "the essential accuracy of his [St. John's] account is guaranteed by the fact that Pilate's whole conduct is only explicable from it."

[1] It is almost impossible to believe, in the teeth of this question, that Pilate can have furnished a part of the cohort for our LORD'S apprehension. It is said that he now asks for a *formal* charge, but would he have set his troops in motion without such a charge?

CHRIST and of His conflict with the Jewish authorities; he knows that if there *had* been any crime, they would have been ready enough to allege it. He suspects that it is altogether a mean and dirty business, and so he tries to shelve it, much as Gallio did at a later date. "Take ye him," he cries, "and judge him according to your law." For though the Jews had not the power of life and death, they had their own courts, and it was the policy of the Romans to leave them to administer their own laws.[1] Then they show their hand; they reveal the reason which has brought them to him. They have adjudged this man to death, and they mean Him to die, but they are, unhappily, without the power to execute Him; Pilate alone can do that. And Pilate, they begin to realize, will never do it, except for reason shown. They must have, therefore, a charge of which he can take cognizance: so they accuse our LORD of sedition, a crime as to which the Romans were very sensitive and one for which they showed no mercy. "We found this man," some of them cry, "perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He Himself is a King and a Messiah." How Pilate, if he reflected at all, must have laughed

[1] Renan compares this rule with that of the French in Algeria, where "the Arabs are governed by the code of Islam."

in his sleeve at their sudden loyalty! Why, *he* knew, no one better, that they all wanted to have a king of their own and chafed and fretted under the tribute which they had to pay; he "knew too much about Jewish expectations to suppose that the Sanhedrim would hate and persecute one who would free them from Roman authority."[1] That charge must have opened his eyes; they are accusing this poor feeble creature, for such our Gracious SAVIOUR must have seemed to him to be, of furthering their own plans and desires. Alas! how inconsistent, how self-contradictory we are when we are swayed by passion and perhaps most of all by theological hatred; it was urged as a crime against the Son of Man what in any other man the Jews would have accounted a virtue; the clamour which they presently raise for Barabbas, who *was* guilty of sedition, shows that! And the charge was false, utterly false, and they knew it; our LORD had practically taught them to pay tribute to Cæsar; they were to render to him the coin which was his. But having hoped to have this charge to bring, they cannot abandon it, and the less so as they have nothing else to offer in its place; so the King of Heaven and the Fount of law and order is charged with rebellion against the Roman

[1] Ellicott.

power. Think of it, brothers and sisters! The Infinite Majesty is done to death by means of lies, the lies of the religious leaders of the day. How true of Him were those ancient words, "They laid to My charge things that I knew not!"

But such an accusation, true or false, Pilate cannot leave unnoticed; he has already been denounced at Rome, and there were many waiting for their opportunity to denounce him again. So he returns to the Praetorium; he will interrogate the prisoner on this point.[1] He finds our CHRIST where he had left Him; He who maintains the motions of the spheres cannot move Himself from the spot; the "LORD of all power and might" stands seemingly powerless. Pilate summons[2] Him to his presence (He would seem to have been left outside the building so far) and asks Him, not, I suspect, without some scorn—scorn that such a pitiful creature with His pallid face and peasant dress could be taken for a king—asks Him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?"[3] Here

[1] Pilate being only a procurator had no quæstor, and therefore conducted the trial himself.

[2] ἐφώνησεν.

[3] It may very reasonably be asked how could the Evangelist know what was said and done within the walls of the Praetorium, when none of the disciples were present? The answer is that he may have derived his information from some of those who *were* present—perhaps from the centurion who presided over

was a plain question, such as a blunt soldier would ask. But observe how the Eternal King both of Jews and Gentiles deals with it; see how He "witnessed before Pontius Pilate a good confession."[1] At first He neither affirms nor denies—He does that later—meanwhile, He has something else to do: He must try to save Pilate, for He "will have all men to be saved." He must put the governor on his guard, must remind him that he is being used as a tool, as a catspaw. That, I feel sure, is the reason why our SAVIOUR asked him, "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" Of course Pilate did not say it of himself—*he* knew nothing against our LORD: others have put the thought into his mind and the word into his lips. But see how Pilate resents CHRIST'S gracious solicitude—just as we sometimes do. He knows that it was no thought of his own; knows that he only speaks as the mouthpiece of the Chief Priests and

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the crucifixion and who became a disciple (St. Luke xxiii. 47), or from some of the officials or the guard. Renan, who holds that "the precise details [of the conversation] are lost, no witness having been able to repeat it to the disciples," allows that "the tenour of it seems to have been well divined by John" (p. 275). But the Evangelist does not write as one who has "divined" it.

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 13.

elders who are collected in the court outside, and for that reason, perhaps, he is the more furious; besides, he is not used to have a prisoner questioning him as to his motives and revealing him to himself, so he replies with some passion. "Am I a Jew?" What interest can *I* have in such family quarrels? All I know is that "thine own nation and the Chief Priests have delivered Thee unto me. What hast Thou done?" There spoke the practical Roman! Ah, but Pilate might soon have discovered, had he cared to inquire, what crimes this alleged culprit had committed. He might have learnt that this "King of the Jews" had gone about doing good, the Friend of all and the enemy only of the base and selfish. He might have asked the sick, and they would have told him how CHRIST had healed them: he might have asked the lepers, and they would have showed how He had cleansed them: he might even have addressed himself to the children, and they would have said that He had blessed them. But Pilate missed his chance: he did not care to inquire, and our LORD would not bear witness to Himself, and so he never knew, unless, perchance, he knows now. But alas, the careless Roman is not alone in this respect; how many there are, even amongst ourselves, who never trouble themselves

about our Redeemer's doings and sayings; the story of His wondrous charity has no charms for them; He has "no form and comeliness, and when they see Him there is no beauty that they should desire Him." Pilate had his chance and—he crucified our King.

But let us proceed with the story. The warning given to the procurator was of no avail, so our SAVIOUR replied to his question. "Yes," he *is* a King, but "my Kingdom is not of this world." These words have been much misunderstood; they have been cited, for example, to prove that our religion is not to be "established by law" or professed by the State. But CHRIST never said *that:* how could He when He was Himself a member of a Church which was identical with the State: by the ordering of GOD, Jewish Church and Jewish State were one. What He did say was that His Kingdom was not such as Pilate supposed: it was not like the dominion of the Herods or of the Cæsars. They had no reason to see in Him a rival; He was no pretender to their places. His servants would never fight that He should not be delivered to the Jews, as the soldiers of Cæsar fought. And here let us observe that our LORD never denied that He was a king: He only affirmed that He was

unlike other kings. And so Pilate seems to have understood Him, for he asks, "Art thou a king then?" Such He must be if He had a kingdom, whatever that kingdom was. And to this inference our LORD replies, "Thou sayest." You yourself have called Me a king and will call Me such again. "Behold your King." "The King of the Jews" —these were the words which Pilate would say to the people or would fasten to the cross. So he is answered out of his own mouth. But then our CHRIST proceeds to say what His kingdom was like and who were His subjects. His realm is the realm of the truth, and the followers of the truth own His sway. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice;" he is My soldier and subject. "The truth." You may imagine how little Pilate understood of "this grand idealism."[1] "The truth!" "What is the truth?" he asks—meaning that there is no certainty: truth can never be found—and then stays not for an answer.

But let *us* stay for a moment, if he did not, stay to consider this word of the Passion. The followers of truth, and they alone, are CHRIST'S subjects; it is

[1] Renan.

"the sceptre of His kingdom." Are we among the number? Is it our mark and badge that we pursue the truth, that we cherish it, and buy it and sell it not, and bow down before it? Are we content to follow wherever it leads? There are many, it has been said, who want to have the truth on their side, but not so many who want to be on the side of the truth. And yet, unless we do desire that, we are none of His disciples. It is the truth-lover, whatever the truth may cost, who recognizes CHRIST as King, and whom He recognizes as His.

But, though Pilate did not wait to hear what the truth was, one thing he had learned, namely, that the Man who spoke thus was one whom Cæsar need not fear. If He had stirred up the people, it was not against the Roman power; His sedition was of a harmless sort. So he goes again to the Chief Priests; he tells them that he has interrogated our LORD: he finds no fault in Him: the charge of sedition has broken down. You may imagine with what vexation, what consternation, indeed, the rulers who had brought the Lamb to the slaughter heard these words. Here is an unforeseen complication: is He going to escape them? They will be defrauded of their prey. They break out, accordingly, into a Babel of voices: they "accuse Him of many things": they clamour

for His execution. It would seem as if fresh charges were now urged against Him, and probably from several quarters at once, but, whatever they were, He heeded them not: "He answered nothing"; as Matthew Henry observes, "He left it for His blood that speaketh to speak."[1] And His silence impressed Pilate almost as much as His speech had done. It was a new thing in his experience that a criminal arraigned at his bar should take accusations so calmly: those with whom he had had to do had loudly protested their innocence or had hurled back invectives against their accusers. And even when Pilate appeals to Him; when he asks, "Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee?" He still answers nothing; so that "the governor marvelled greatly"; perhaps he had heard how wonderful were CHRIST'S words. But we know what that silence meant, if he did not. It was not merely that "speech is silvern and silence is golden"; not merely that He might set us an example of uncomplaining meekness; not merely that it was futile to defend Himself when His trial was a mockery and His condemnation a foregone conclusion; not merely that His hour was come, and He was straitened till

[1] "He was a sage, even in His silence, and because of His silence."—Keim, p. 162.

it was accomplished. There was another reason why "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, even so He opened not His mouth": was not the thought of the prophet ever present in His mind, "Behold, the LORD GOD will help Me: who is he that shall condemn Me?" (Isa. l. 9). He looked to the future; He had respect to the recompense of reward: He saw, at that moment, what eye hath not seen. For if Stephen, at his trial before the Council, saw "the heavens opened and JESUS standing on the right hand of GOD," may not, nay, must not, our REDEEMER Himself have looked beyond these things of time and sense, the judgement-hall and the fierce, gesticulating crowd, and the crafty elders and the time-serving governor, to the day when all the conditions should be changed; when "our GOD shall come and shall not keep silence" (Ps. l. 3); when the thrones should be set and the books be opened and the Son of Man sit on the throne of His glory? Why should He trouble to defend Himself, especially when His death was pre-ordained? He would commit His cause to Him that judgeth righteously, and be still. As we read in one of the Easter-day psalms, "In the shadow of Thy wings will I take refuge until these calamities be overpast."

But to resume the narrative. The enemies of CHRIST see that Pilate is impressed in His favour.

So they renew their charges: they press them on his attention. "He stirreth up the people," they cry, "beginning from Galilee to this place." And now we come to an incident of the trial of which St. Luke alone tells us, namely, the sending of our LORD to Herod. And here we may ask how it comes to pass that this Evangelist, and he alone, should have recorded this detail. I believe the answer to be that he had heard of it from Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. We know that she was one of CHRIST'S disciples and ministered to Him of her substance, and there is reason to believe that the Evangelist was brought into contact with her; it was probably from the band of devoted women of whom she was one that he had the copious account which he gives us of the Annunciation and the Infancy. Of course *she* would hear what was done in Herod's halls, and she may well have passed it on to St. Luke. Anyhow, we can see how Herod came to be implicated in our SAVIOUR'S death. It was that word "Galilee" that gave Pilate a chance. When he heard it, he caught at the word and instantly inquired whether CHRIST was a Galilean. He discovered that He was, and was therefore when in Galilee subject to Herod's jurisdiction. He decides at once to send Him to Herod, who as a professed Jew would attend the feasts, and who

was at that time in Jerusalem.[1] In any case, it is a compliment to that petty ruler, and it may help to heal the breach between them : more than that, Herod may take the case off his hands, so to Herod he sends his prisoner. That meant, of course, another shameful march through the streets ; another exposure to contempt and spitting. Have you ever reflected how much of the city our adorable CHRIST perambulated in His misery—from Annas to Caiaphas ; from Caiaphas to Pilate; from Pilate to Herod ; from Herod back again to Pilate : from Pilate to Calvary. And everywhere the streets and bazaars were crowded with spectators : everywhere He would be subjected

[1] It seems to me that Keim, with all his learning and candour, is constantly carried away by his prepossessions—or hallucinations. Just as he would not allow that Pilate could leave the Praetorium to speak to the Sanhedrists, because it would compromise his dignity, so he (Keim) will not hear of this demission of our SAVIOUR to Herod. And why? I will state the reasons in his own words. "The silence of the other accounts concerning Antipas is significant. An advance made by Pilate to Antipas, whom for years past he had hated with a deadly hatred, a partial renunciation of Roman supremacy within his own territory . . . is as improbable as the farcical sending back of JESUS by Antipas" (p. 105). I will ask any impartial person, which is the more improbable—that Pilate and Herod alike, each wishing to rid himself of an odious office, should have acted as St. Luke describes, and describes so simply and quietly, or that all this episode should have been invented by the Evangelist or one of his informants—and that when there were hundreds of persons living to contradict him.

to insult, if not outrage. Many of the people who had wavered as to JESUS, would see in His arrest and trial a Divine judgement upon Him.[1] And there is another remark to be made here : it concerns the character of our LORD'S judges. What Annas was I have already described to you : as for Caiaphas, it is enough to say here that his mind was made up that it was expedient that our LORD should die : He must be sacrificed for the good of the nation.[2] And you know the sort of man that Pilate was : we have his portrait not only in the Gospel story but in the pages of Josephus : a hard, selfish, strong-willed, unscrupulous Roman, who stuck at nothing where his interest was concerned. There remains, then, this Herod. Do you remember what our LORD called him—"that fox"; that is indication enough as to his temper. But we have other indications to go by. This is the man who seduced his brother's wife and who sacrificed John the Baptist, albeit he respected and feared him, to a dancing-girl! I should not wonder if Pilate thought of that when he decided to send CHRIST to him. "Herod," he may have said, "will not be tortured by scruples as I am. He chopped off John's head to please his mistress; he is the one for such a case as this; to Herod He shall go!"

[1] Weiss, p. 350. [2] St. John xi. 50

Such were the four judges of JESUS CHRIST: what favour, what fair play could He expect from any one of them? But from Herod at least He had a welcome: Herod was rejoiced to see Him of Whom, from his steward and others—his foster-brother Manaen may have been among them [1]—he had heard so much; he hopes that some miracle may be performed in his presence—do you notice, by the way, the indirect testimony which those words supply to the miracles of CHRIST? If He had not wrought any miracles and the historian wanted us to believe that he had, he would hardly have informed us that Herod hoped to see a miracle and was disappointed. And there was possibly another reason why Herod welcomed this interview: he may have wanted to be sure that this was not the Baptist, whom he had beheaded, for the memory of that deed haunted and terrified him.[2] And so, when he was told that the Galilean prophet is in his courtyard, awaiting his pleasure; that Pilate has sent Him to him for trial, he was flattered and he was glad, and with an eager curiosity he would order our CHRIST to be brought in. He has many questions to ask, and you may imagine his surprise and vexation when he receives no answer—our SAVIOUR, who had some words for Annas and Caiaphas and Pilate, had

[1] Acts xiii. 1. [2] St. Matt. xiv. 2.

none for him. Petty princes, such as he was, are always sensitive as to their dignity, and he felt it a blow to his dignity, he was humiliated, when he got no word from our SAVIOUR. But I expect that he too was impressed by the striking contrast between the vehement accusations of the Chief Priests and the silence of the accused; such a spectacle he had never seen before. But that contrast would not allay his mortification, and he would be glad to have his revenge: to minds of that mean order revenge is always sweet. Has the prisoner disparaged him? then he will humble His pride, and the more so as he knows that such a course will gratify the Jewish elders: his ears are still ringing with their fierce denunciations. So Herod and his men of war, his captains and his body-guard, set our gentle CHRIST at naught; they held Him up to contempt and mockery.[1] He has been mocked already, mocked and abused by the minions of Caiaphas; now He must be subjected to a like mockery again. Ah, He constantly treads His path of sorrow and shame *over again*: you will find that every cruelty, every indignity is repeated—the bonds, the march, the trial, the condemnation, the blows and buffetings. Was there ever sorrow

[1] In Tissot's graphic picture Herod looks down on the proceedings from a gallery.

like unto His sorrow? was there ever a cup, in the history of mankind, so full of bitterness as His! You will observe that He was *twice* arrayed in a pretentious dress, for Herod, in his pique and scorn, had Him tricked out in gorgeous apparel,[1] probably in one of his own discarded vestments, before he sent Him back to Pilate. I question, however, whether our SAVIOUR retained this dress on his return journey.[2] I imagine that, after it had served its purpose, which was to wound and humiliate our LORD, it was returned to the king's wardrobe, or was appropriated by some of the guard.

But this agonizing journey has not been wholly fruitless: St. Luke mentions, parenthetically, one result which accrued therefrom. "The same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together." This has the great Peacemaker wrought! I do not mean that He contemplated this, but He procured it by His Passion—"those who quarrelled with one another could yet unite against Him."[3] "It was the day of the union of all evil men, of all wicked men

[1] The meaning of ἐσθῆς λαμπρὰ ("gorgeous robe") is much disputed, but we can no longer assume that this garment was white and glistening. The root idea of the adjective would seem to be *visibility*.—Ellicott, p. 34.

[2] St. Luke, xxiii. 11, leaves this point uncertain.

[3] M. Henry.

against the LORD."[1] Even the Pharisees and the Sadducees combined for once to take away His life.

And so, through the mean streets and the hostile crowds, the Great and Spotless Sufferer passes back to the Praetorium. The experience which He predicted for His disciples—that they should be "brought before governors and kings"—He had it first Himself!

> "He leads us through no darker room
> Than He has gone before."

For the second time He stands before Pilate. And there for the present we leave Him, abject in appearance and alone and friendless—and calm and resolute.

[1] Lange.

MEDITATION VIII

THE CONDEMNATION

YOU may imagine with what chagrin, what mortification Pilate would learn—perhaps from a lictor, perhaps from the noises in the court before the palace—that the strange prisoner is thrown on his hands again, and that he must begin his weary work anew. The strident angry voices, mingled perhaps with shouts of triumph, warn him that his will be no easy task. Herod, he presently learns, has sent him civil messages, but that is all; it remains for him to pass sentence. And it looks as if for the moment he was resolved that he would *not* pass sentence of death; he would not be made a tool of. For he calls together the Chief Priests and the rulers—it would seem as if the members of the Council had dispersed; as if only some of the number (perhaps the Herodians among them) had accompanied our LORD to Herod (the Pharisees may have had their scruples)—he calls them all together, and at the same time *the people*—it looks as if he had resolved to appeal to the

populace—and in their presence reviews the case. "You have brought this man to me," he says, "as one that perverteth the people. Well, I have examined Him, and so has Herod, and we neither of us find that He has in any way deserved death. I will, therefore, make a compromise with you; I will chastise Him and release Him." Do you observe what Pilate says: "He is not guilty of any crime that I know of, but, to satisfy you, I will torture Him severely." They say that compromises often involve compromise of principle; this certainly did. Was there ever a more flagitious proposal? "I will chastise Him as extremely guilty, and then release Him as practically innocent!" However, it was a proposition which, apparently, was never discussed, for it looks as if that word "release" gave a new turn to events. It looks as if it had reminded the Jews of the custom of the feast—that one prisoner should be released to signalize the occasion and to have a share in the rejoicing.[1] And so it passes from lip to lip, and everywhere the cry is heard, "Release! Release!" It seems probable to me that the Jewish leaders had long since agreed that when the feast came round

[1] We do not hear of any such custom under Roman rule elsewhere. But, then, we do not find a people like the Jews elsewhere.

they would ask for the life of Barabbas (who, just because of his sedition, was a national hero, a "notable prisoner"), and Pilate, too, may have known that this demand would be made upon Him—not that he was thinking of the custom of the feast when he spoke of a release. But some of the bystanders, possibly some who sympathized with our SAVIOUR,[1] catch at the word and clamour that the ancient custom should be observed. The rulers, remembering Palm Sunday, are very much afraid that, after all, the mob may ask for CHRIST'S deliverance; and so they move hither and thither in the throng, shouting the name of Barabbas, or "passing the word"[2] to petition for *his* release; they "persuaded the multitude" to ask for him[3]; they also insisted at the same time that JESUS should be destroyed. You see how a robber and a red-handed murderer was more to

[1] Weiss, p. 352, thinks it certain that our LORD'S followers first suggested a release.

[2] Weiss.

[3] "Efforts must have been made to excite the popular feeling gradually against Him, for of themselves the people would never have presented such a request."—Weiss, p. 353. "Many a fiendish whisper is running through the crowd that the Nazarene was a blasphemer."—Ellicott, p. 347. "The strong word ἀνέσεισαν shows the determined way in which the priestly party were endeavouring to turn the tide of popular feeling against our LORD."—*Ibid.*

their liking than the Immaculate Lamb of GOD. Pilate hears their cries for a release; he is well-nigh deafened with them; he also hears on every side the name of Barabbas. So he asks, as soon as he could procure silence, "Whether of the twain will ye that I should release unto you?" He *hoped*, no doubt, that they would ask for our LORD; but can he have expected it? He may possibly have done so; he may have conjectured that the people were not at all of the same mind as their rulers, especially if, as is likely, he had heard of the recent triumphal procession. But if so, he was soon undeceived. They all cried aloud for the robber. "Away with this man," they shouted, "and release unto us Barabbas." And that unanimous cry has often been cited as a proof of the fickleness of mobs; it has been said that the very men who on the Sunday shouted "Hosanna" on the following Friday howled "Crucify Him." But I venture to remind you that we cannot be certain that the multitude was the same. I do not deny, of course, that mobs are fickle and easily wrought upon; I only say that we have no proof that the dense and deafening crowd then outside the Practorium was composed of the same men who had acclaimed our SAVIOUR as King so recently. Anyhow, that crowd has soon made up its mind, and Pilate recognizes it; it is the

homicide that they clamour for—the murderer must be granted unto them. Pilate "released unto them Barabbas."[1] I imagine that he then and there gave orders for his release; perhaps this robber, forthwith set free, joined the crowd in clamouring for CHRIST'S death. Be that as it may, CHRIST saved *him* from death; already He suffers "the just for the unjust." Barabbas had committed the sedition: our LORD was crucified for it. But Pilate's difficulty with respect to his other prisoner remained—what was to be done with Him? He asks them, "What, then, shall I do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews?" He was willing enough to release Him too; but will that satisfy them? No, it will not satisfy them, and they straightway tell him so. With one voice they

[1] In some MSS. of St. Matthew's Gospel we read, "They had then a notable prisoner called *Jesus Barabbas.*" But there can be little doubt that this is a clerical error, though Keim regards it with some favour. He also suggests (p. 97) that the *stasiast* Barabbas may have murdered persons favourable to the Roman cause, and may also have been an associate of the Galileans, "whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices." Renan also warmly favours this reading. "The name of JESUS," he says, "has disappeared from the majority of the MSS.," but it "has, nevertheless, very great authorities in its favour." (The authorities are, briefly, "a few cursives, the Armenian version, and some copies of the Jerusalem Syriac."—Hastings, i. 245.) And like Keim, he understands Barabbas to mean Bar Rabban, *i. e.* the son of a Rabbi.

cry, "Let Him be crucified!" Oh, the shame of it! "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid."[1] "The people whom He had loved, and for whom He had lived, pronounced the sentence of condemnation."[2] I wonder whether He recalled the Psalmist's words, "My soul is among lions." They not only prefer a murderer to the Holy One of GOD, but they bargain for the murderer's life and the SAVIOUR'S death; they were as insistent for the crucifixion of the latter as for the release of the former. This indignity our King endured—that the mercy showed to a cut-throat, an assassin, was denied to Him! And that is not all. His was the shame of being denounced by His own people to death, when a Gentile ruler strove for His life. For Pilate did strive and labour for His release. The angry cries of "Crucify Him!" only moved him to a passionate remonstrance. "Why," he exclaims, and for the third time—"why, what evil hath He done?" What evil, indeed! There were many there who could have told of the abundant good that He had wrought, but not one of them could convict him of sin. No, there was no answer to that question. Evil or good, it was all the same; "let Him be crucified." But Pilate will not have Him crucified. Even he, cheap as he held

[1] Jer. ii 12. [2] Weiss

the life of a Jew, revolted from such a crime. "I have found no cause of death in Him," he says; "He has done nothing to merit crucifixion. I will therefore do as I said before. I will chastise Him and release Him."[1] If He is scourged, He will be discredited as a teacher and can do no further harm.

"Chastise Him"—that is a colourless word; it does not necessarily imply any great suffering, for we chastise our children, and the word in the Greek strictly refers to the education of children. But you know what that chastisement was; it was that "dreaded scourge,"[2] of which the Latin poet speaks. The Roman scourge was composed of leathern thongs, each of which was studded with sharp pieces of bone or nails and was weighted with lead—they showed no mercy in those barbarous days! This scourging generally preceded crucifixion, and was the most terrible part of that ordeal, and it was altogether so cruel and degrading that no Roman must endure it. But in our SAVIOUR'S

[1] Weiss, p. 355, *n.*, objects that Pilate "could not avow with shameless publicity that he was ready to scourge an innocent man, though not to crucify him." But Pilate never said that CHRIST was "innocent" *from the Jewish point of view.* On the contrary, he bade the Jews judge Him "according to their law." What he says is that, whatever CHRIST has done, scourging will atone for it at his tribunal.

[2] *Horribile flagellum*: Horace, *Sat.*, i. 3, 119.

case it was not administered as a preliminary to the cross, but as a substitute for it; Pilate hoped that this suffering, this judicial torture, would satiate the thirst of the Jews for vengeance; perhaps he also hoped that it would move the populace to pity. And so he gives the word or the sign for scourging, and the soldiers lead our most loving CHRIST away: they disappear within the walls of the Prætorium. There, we are told, they gather the whole band, the entire cohort.[1] This force can hardly have been drawn up on parade, for the subsequent proceedings were altogether irregular, and the word used, "they *call together* the band," almost implies that the soldiers were collected to see the spectacle, to revel in our LORD'S sufferings: not one of them would willingly miss so exciting a performance. Their first act would be to strip our SAVIOUR; as He was naked on the cross, so He was naked before the lash. Then they would bind His blessed hands, and fasten them to a post or column[2]; this was done to prevent escape: the

[1] St. Mark uses the word σπεῖρα. These soldiers would be provincials, probably Syrians, and, if so, more than usually hostile to the Jews.—Keim, after Wetstein.

[2] Tissot, whose commentary suffers much from his amazing credulity, gravely informs us that the column of the scourging is now at Rome, to which place it was transferred in the tenth century. He says more, viz. that our SAVIOUR was bound to

agony was so great, when the scourge was applied, that the sufferer would otherwise have fallen down or torn himself away; it was also done that the bent posture might give them the more purchase on the back. And then the blows fell; you may be sure that the soldiers showed no mercy; perhaps they took the scourge in turn: when one was exhausted, another took his place. We can hardly imagine the agony; no one can who has not experienced it; ancient writers tell us that sometimes "the eyes, face and breast were wounded and the teeth knocked out by the lash,"[1] and it may have been so now; it was a common saying that "the Jews chastised with whips and the Romans with scorpions." Then, at least, was fulfilled that saying, "The plowers ploughed upon My back; they made long furrows"; the sacred body of the world's REDEEMER would be a lacerated mass; in the back that "bare our sins and carried our sorrows" there would be no part whole. That was the baptism of blood wherewith He was baptized; it was His second bloody sweat. I wonder how long this ordeal lasted; I suspect until they were weary of it, or till they had done as much as they dared to do, without

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three different columns, for all of which he professes to account; portions of them, at least, are preserved somewhere.

[1] Keim.

risking His life, for criminals sometimes died under the lash. And all this agony is compressed into one word—"scourged"—by the Evangelists; no more is said about it. But they do tell us that worse, if aught could be worse, was to follow; He is subjected for the third time to open mockery and derision. They may have heard from Herod's men of war about the shining robe; they will not be behindhand in a like refinement of cruelty. But it is not necessary to suppose that Herod's, or any other example, had incited them to array our SAVIOUR as a king: they would readily do that of their own accord; "base minds rejoice in insult," and it was "an hour of the licence and triumph of all the gross tumultuary powers of humanity" (Lange). Does He claim to be King of the Jews? He shall have the mock homage of a king. So they clothe Him in a purple or scarlet robe—the Evangelists are not very exact in the terms they use to describe colour—probably it was an old *chlamys,* or military cloak; they had nothing by them better fitted to simulate royalty. And this they put upon His raw and bleeding shoulders: a "vesture dipped in blood" it would presently be: He is "red in apparel," red in His own gore, and they hastily plait a crown of thorns —such there were, I dare say, growing in the courtyard, and they would take the first thing which would serve

their turn. And how appropriate it was, for "thorns came in with sin."[1] They pluck a few twigs and weave of them a chaplet and put it on His brow, and they rudely thrust a reed into His hand and bow the knee before Him—Him before whom every knee shall bow—crying as they did so, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Then, weary of mocking Him, or wanting to inflict still more pain, one would snatch the reed out of His hand—you will observe that He had held it, perhaps in His bound and helpless hands: anyhow, He did not withstand their mockery: He lent Himself, so to speak, to their insults—would snatch the reed and wantonly beat Him on the head therewith.[2] Think of it, Christian men! This they did to the CREATOR of the universe; this the LORD of the spheres and the infinite spaces endured for us men and for our salvation—for our salvation, for "by His stripes we are healed."

You may imagine what a picture of misery the Son of Man presented after this scourging and this mockery; you may imagine the contrast between His haggard face and the insignia of royalty which He

[1] M. Henry.

[2] "It is difficult," says Renan, "to understand how Roman dignity could stoop to acts so shameful." He accounts for the mockery by the supposition that "the troops were only auxiliaries; the Roman legions would not thus have degraded themselves."

wore. How touching is St. John's recollection of that appearance: "Then came JESUS forth wearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment"—he seems to see Him issuing in this strange array from the Praetorium! Did Pilate think, I wonder, that the evidence of so much suffering and shame would move the Jews to compassion? Was that why he brought Him forward and showed Him to the crowd? No, we cannot be sure that he cherished any hopes whatsoever of kindling their pity: he seems to have exhibited our LORD to prove that he had "chastised" Him, as he had promised to do, and to make it clear to them that He deserved nothing more, for again he testifies, "I find no crime in Him": that is why he points to the victim of their spite and hatred, and cries, "Behold the man!"—here is the man whom you have accused of so many crimes, the man for whose death you are thirsting: He has suffered, as you see; I will now release Him. I question whether Pilate's *Ecce Homo* meant anything more than this, but it would be strange if *we* did not see a deeper meaning in his words: he summons us to gaze on the ideal, the perfect, man, the crown and flower of our race, for never since the world was did any man rise so high, or show such nobility as this one. Just as "man never spake," so

man never lived "like this man." It is a curious circumstance that some four centuries before this tragedy, the philosopher Plato drew a picture of the perfect man. That picture is a rough portrait of our LORD and MASTER. He told, this Greek, of one who should live a life of purity and goodness and beneficence, and whose recompense would be that He was crucified. For he had realized that the acme of beauty and of merit is reached, not in the mere exhibition of goodness and kindness, but when these qualities, these services, are requited with ingratitude and persecution. And this, too, is the teaching of Holy Writ—or, rather, of CHRIST and His apostles. There is no merit or distinction, we are told, in doing good to them who do good to us, but when we "do well and suffer for it," this is acceptable with GOD. Of those who do good and thereby gain the world's gratitude and applause, it may be said that "they *have* their reward."

But whatever Pilate meditated when he led out our LORD and bade them "behold the man," it may be questioned whether even *he* was prepared for the outburst of rage and fury which this spectacle provoked; it was the signal for loud, persistent cries of "Crucify Him!" "Crucify Him!"—"a Litany of Death" it has been called—they assailed his ears on

every side; was it, I wonder, that the crown of thorns incensed them, or was it that they were increasingly apprehensive that Pilate, after all, would release Him? Be that as it may, their malice, their rancorous hatred, was an odious offence to the governor: the heathen soldier was juster and kinder than the elect people of GOD. "Take ye Him," he cries, "and crucify Him." I will have no part in such a deed, for He is innocent: "I find no crime in Him: if He must be put to death, you must do it." But they answer at once that there is crime in Him, and they say what it is: "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of GOD." You will observe that there is a total change of front. The former charge of sedition is, for the moment, abandoned: they recur to the ground on which the Sanhedrim had condemned Him, the crime of blasphemy; He has professed Himself to be divine. So we have His enemies testifying, not indeed to His divinity, but to His claim to divinity. They had done this once before, when they took up stones to cast at Him, asserting that He had "made Himself equal with GOD." They do much the same here. There are Christians who say that our LORD was a mere man. But if that was the case, why did the Jews want to stone Him, or to crucify Him?

They clearly understood Him to say that He was something more. And so Pilate understood their words: he was "afraid" when he heard them; he wonders whether there can be something superhuman about his strange prisoner; he will ask Him about His origin. So he retires again into the Praetorium, taking our LORD along with him, and there he asks, not without some awe and misgiving, "Whence art Thou?" Art Thou (he means) from heaven or of men? He was evidently impressed and as evidently alarmed, and it is possible that if our SAVIOUR had answered that question, had told the truth about His marvellous being, how that He was "conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," Pilate would forthwith, in sheer dread, have set Him at liberty. Yes, but it would not answer His purpose to be set at liberty; that would be to reject the cup which the Father had given Him to drink, and to leave us to our fate, so He gave Pilate no answer.[1] And the governor felt this silence to be an affront: he had "marvelled" when Christ "answered nothing" to the clamorous accusations of the Chief Priests, but that he could understand; it was the most dignified thing to do; but when our SAVIOUR treated *him*

[1] Weiss thinks that JESUS was silent because Pilate could not comprehend.

in the same way, it was another thing altogether, and he resented it; it belittled his authority. "Speakest Thou not unto me," he cries; "knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee and have power to release Thee?" As who should say, "Thy life is in my hands, and Thou art risking it." Then our MASTER did speak. About His life, His fate, He says nothing: His life was not dear unto Him: He was abundantly content to die. But He must put Pilate in his place, and at the same time remind him of his responsibility. "Thou hast spoken of thy power," He seems to say, "as if it were all thine own: that power has been given thee from above—'the powers that be are ordained of God'—and to God thou art responsible for its exercise. True, My life is in thy hands and thou canst take it away from the earth, but that will be a sin, though a less sin than that of these who, in sheer malice, have put My life into thy power." Such I conceive to be the meaning of our SAVIOUR'S words, though that meaning has been very variously explained. But of one thing we may be sure, namely, that Pilate now realized his responsibility as he had not done before. St. John tells us that "upon this Pilate sought to release Him"; these words roused him to fresh efforts. What the procurator said or did we do not know; but we do know

that he strove to save our LORD from death; he was "determined to let Him go"—we may infer that from the threat, for such it was, of the Jews, "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend: everyone that maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." And it looks as if this threat decided him; this was the turning-point; he understood that if he persisted in his resolve, there would presently be a tumult, and he would have trouble with the emperor, and soon his occupation might be gone. And he had had more than enough of tumults already, and he was not popular—in fact, he was hated—and there were those who would be glad to have a handle against him. And what a handle was this—that he had been untrue to the empire—he knew well the mischief which such a charge might do him, especially when the Cæsar of the time was the nervous and suspicious Tiberius. No, he could not face it. Better, he argued, let this man perish than that he should have such an accusation to meet. So the die was cast. Jewish malice has prevailed; the crisis is over; Pilate has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. That was the moment when

"The good man chooses, while the coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit whilst his LORD is crucified."

It was when "Pilate heard that saying," that veiled threat, that "he brought JESUS forth and sate down on the judgement-seat," the chair of office from which the sentence was pronounced. This chair or tribune[1] stood upon a raised pavement, one of those mosaic or tesselated platforms which the Romans seem to have constructed wherever they went, and so much did it belong to the administration of justice, or the exercise of authority, that Julius Cæsar is said[2] to have carried a portable pavement about with him. This mosaic was called "Gabbatha" by the Jews, but what that word exactly means is not certain. It points to an *elevation*, but that is all that we can say, and it was a maxim with the Romans that justice should be administered from high ground, so that all could see and hear. Here Pilate took his seat, having first brought our SAVIOUR forth into the open space before the residence, and all the spectators, from the officials and friends who sate on benches beside him and the Sanhedrists, who may have crowded the steps leading up to the tribunal, down to the people below and the troop of soldiers that kept guard,[3]

[1] "Perhaps the ancient golden royal chair."—Keim.
[2] By Suetonius.
[3] Keim.

would gather from his so doing that he was about to pass sentence—among the Romans the sentence was always pronounced publicly, and in the open air, though the examination might be private, as in this case. But he did not give judgment at once, for he was interrupted; at this moment, as it would seem, he received a message from his wife, whose name tradition gives as Claudia Procula.[1] Whether that message was written or spoken we cannot say, but we may presume that it was meant to be private —for Pilate's ear alone.[2] And if so, the question arises: How did St. Matthew come to hear of it? I suggest to you that Procula—if that was her name—told of it; she would be none the less likely to do so, because her counsel had been disregarded; she spoke of it to her women friends, and so it came to the ear of the Evangelist. I think it not at all improbable that what she had heard of CHRIST, for both she and her husband would seem to have had some knowledge

[1] So she is called in the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.

[2] In Tissot's picture the message is brought by Procula's maid, who at the same time shows him her mistress's ring. Keim rejects both this message and the handwashing as interpolations by an editor of St. Matthew's memoir, because (1) the other Evangelists do not attest it—this when there is no Evangelist who records, or professes to record everything—and because (2) Pilate would never have recourse to a Jewish usage like this—when it is not by any means exclusively Jewish.

of His words and deeds,[1] had greatly impressed her in His favour; she may, indeed, like Joanna, have been a disciple, but secretly, because of her husband. You will say that all this is conjecture, and that is so, but why should we not reverently conjecture, so long as we do not dogmatize? Anyhow, she sent a message to Pilate, "Have thou nothing to do with that righteous man!"—from which words I gather that she had been convinced before this trial of His righteousness. She says she has had a terrible dream: "I have suffered many things this day," were her words. Why "this day," for dreams come to us as a rule in the night? I hold that the answer to that question is that this was a waking dream, or a dream since daylight; if so, she would attach all the more importance to it, for both Greeks and Romans regarded their waking dreams as specially significant—they held that "dreams came from Jove," particularly those of the morning. But her message, though it may have given Pilate a moment's pause, did not alter his resolve; he thought of the gloomy Tiberius and his suspicions, and decided that he must go through with it, and so he keeps his seat and they press round him to hear his decree.

[1] Renan remarks that "she may have seen the gentle Galilean from some window in the palace overlooking the courts of the Temple." But not if Pilate occupied the palace of Herod.

But he will first gratify his spite, for he would hate the Jewish rulers more than ever, hate them for constraining him to this evil deed, by another gibe at them. He points to our Most Holy LORD and says, "Behold your King." It may have been the crown of thorns and the purple robe that prompted this speech—that and the mean and abject appearance of the Man of Sorrows; Pilate insinuates that this despised and rejected person was a fit monarch for that contemptible race. Still, we must not forget that a few days before CHRIST had been acclaimed as a king, and it is possible that the governor had that also in his mind, and the Jews may have had it in their mind, and their cries, "Away with him," "Crucify Him," and the asseveration of the Chief Priests, "We have no king but Cæsar," may have been meant, among other things, to attest their loyalty: if others had cried, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the LORD," they were not of the number. "No king but Cæsar!" Then what of "MESSIAH the prince"? Why, they renounced their own religion and its fondest hopes! "Thus Judaism committed suicide, and ever since has its dead body been carried about in show from land to land and from century to century."[1] And these were the voices, the priests'

[1] Edersheim, p. 581.

and the people's, that prevailed: Pilate cannot stand against their fierce determination; it shall be "as they required." But see what he does before the sentence is pronounced! He must bow to the popular will or a tumult will be made. But he will clear himself: they shall all know that this is not his doing. So he takes water and washes his hands, publicly, in the sight of the people, and says, "I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man"—do you observe? the very words which his wife had used!—my hands are clean; "see ye to it." No, he was not innocent; we cannot rid ourselves of responsibility so easily as that; we must "wash our hands," as the psalmist says, "in *innocency*," and not in water; "in vain he protests against the deed which he perpetrates,"[1] he was guilty, though they were guiltier still. All the water in the world would not cleanse him of the crime of consenting to CHRIST'S death: of what avail are forms without performances? He took water but he gave sentence all the same.[2] And do you notice the words, "see ye to it"? This is the second time me meet with them in this Passion-story. This is what the

[1] M. Henry.

[2] It is hardly likely that Pilate was prompted to this particular form of disclaimer by the Jewish rite, of which we read in Deut xxi. 6. This object-lesson was not peculiar to Jews.

Chief Priests and elders said to Judas when he brought back the silver pieces, and cried, "I have sinned"; this is what Pilate says in turn to *them*, "that is your look out, not mine." Yes, and they were more defiant than Judas; he was penitent and he hanged himself in proof of it, whereas they cry aloud that they gladly charge themselves with the responsibility: they are not afraid. "His blood be on us and on our children.' Well, their prayer has been answered; GOD said His "Amen" to it; something like a curse has rested on them ever since. "Mark the revenges of history . . . Caiaphas was deposed the year following. Herod died in infamy and exile . . . The house of Annas was destroyed a generation later by an infuriated mob, and his son was dragged through the streets and scourged and beaten to his place of murder . . . Cæsar after Cæsar outraged and tyrannized and pillaged and oppressed them till at last they rose in wild revolt against the Cæsar whom they had claimed, and a Cæsar slaked in the blood of its best defenders the red ashes of their burnt and desecrated Temple . . . They and their children were themselves crucified in myriads by the Romans outside their own walls,"[1] till the wood ran short for the crosses. Aye, and it goes on still. What have not their children suffered

[1] Farrar, *Life of Christ*, ii. 389, 390.

in the ghettos of our cities—at York, five hundred Jews were burnt to death in Clifford's Tower, and that is only a sample of many similar atrocities. And do you say that that was centuries ago? Yes, but the *Judenhass* flares up at this moment in Germany, as anti-Semitism does in France, and how many *pograms* and massacres have there been in Russia within the last decade? Do you want to know whether there is a recompensing GOD? You have only to look at the untold sufferings of the Jewish race. What are they for? There has been no idolatry since the Babylonian captivity. It is because of this crime of Calvary. His blood *has* been on them and their children.[1]

Thus they made their shameful compact. Pilate protests that he is innocent. *They* are ready enough to sustain the responsibility. And so the governor adjudges our REDEEMER to death. Sitting on the *bema* he delivers up the Prince of Life and the King of Love to die the death of the cross. Thus it is that we "pass to the most appalling event that the world has ever seen."[2]

[1] "If ever a crime was the crime of a nation it was the death of JESUS."—Renan.

[2] Keim, p. 115.

MEDITATION IX

THE CRUCIFIXION—THE THREE HOURS' MEDITATIONS

~~WE have seen our~~ The CHRIST, our King, Prince of Life, and LORD of Glory, has been crushed, betrayed, apprehended, arraigned, abused, condemned. ~~We have seen Him~~ suffering such indignities, such cruelties, such agonies as no man ever endured before. But all this is but "the beginning of sorrows," the vestibule of death. To-day we must watch Him dying, dying by inches, dying the most shameful and one of the most painful of deaths, even the death of the cross.

No sooner, it would seem, had Pilate given sentence —not sentence upon a crime, but that it should be as the wicked Jews required—than his soldiers proceeded to execute it.[1] No time was to be lost: delay was hazardous; the sooner their prisoner was out of the way, the better for the peace of the city. The first

[1] M. Henry remarks that the same Roman power brought about CHRIST'S birth at Bethlehem and His death upon the cross.

thing to do was to change His attire, for He was still wearing the clothing of mockery, the purple cloak and the crown of thorns. We are tempted to wonder why the procurator had not had these cruel *insignia* removed: it cannot be that he entered into the spirit of the jest; that hardly agrees with the respect which he had testified for the accused. Was it then, like the title on the cross, to show contempt for Jewish pretensions? I believe the true explanation to be that in his disgust with himself and the Jews, it did not fix his attention; what was this clothing compared with the crime which he was about to commit? Be that as it may, our LORD had still retained His robe and crown of shame. But now the purple robe is removed—and that would involve a fresh torture, for it would be glued by the coagulated blood to His sacred flesh, and they would have to wrench it off. This they did, no doubt, without any ceremony, but do you observe, the crown of thorns remained; that is to say, there is no mention of its removal: it would seem as if our SAVIOUR wore it on the cross, wore it when He gave up the ghost. That was of no value, but the cloak belonged to somebody, so it must be surrendered. That garment, dyed with the precious blood, fell to some coarse soldier, whilst rough and peremptory hands clad our REDEEMER in His own

poor garments, in the *abba* of a Syrian peasant. Then they lead Him forth, out of the Praetorium (I imagine this was about eight o'clock), and presently out of the city! ~~the heir is cast out of the vineyard~~![1] But see, He carries something more than His mean and disordered dress—disordered it would be after such a night and such ill-usage; He carries His cross (St. John is explicit on that point); like Isaac, he carries the wood for the sacrifice. Not the whole structure—that would be too crushing a load for any human being to sustain—but the cross beam, ~~the *patibulum* they called it~~. The shaft of the cross, the upright plank or stock, presumably of olive wood, would be already in its place at Golgotha[2]; anyhow, Christ did not carry *that*; such a burden no man could support; it was the cross beam, either in the arms,[3] or, more probably, strapped to the shoulders,

[1] If Pilate occupied the palace of Herod, near to the present Jaffa Gate, and the crucifixion took place, as seems most likely, outside the Damascus Gate, the procession would pass through the most crowded part of the city.

[2] It is not necessary to suppose that it had remained there, after prior use, though crucifixions were often taking place: Augustus crucified 6,000 slaves at once, and Alexander Jannæus had 800 Jews crucified within the walls of Jerusalem (Keim); indeed, it is *possible* that the hole was dug and the shaft fixed in its place under our SAVIOUR'S eyes.

[3] Keim favours this view, but it seems to me most improbable: we have no reason to think that our LORD'S arms were free to

that He bore, and we may remember how these shoulders had been lacerated with the scourge. And here I must again remark on the reticence or "great reserve" of the sacred writers: they never particularize the sufferings of CHRIST, never seek to harrow our feelings: we have to infer, for they do not tell us, what that carrying of the cross would mean.[1] And this reticence is in itself a proof of the veracity of this Passion-story: these touching details would have found a conspicuous place in the pages of a forger; an artless, unstudied narrative of what they had seen and heard, this is what the unlearned and unpretentious Evangelists give us. But to that sober narrative let us now revert. You see that our CHRIST is not alone, though His disciples, alas! had left Him alone; He has two companions—felons they were; possibly rebels and certainly robbers: they are to be crucified at His side.[2] And what an infamy was

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carry it, even if they could sustain it. He had been securely bound before this: those bonds would hardly be dispensed with.

[1] The only N.T. passages in which a clear trace of sympathy with the physical pains of JESUS is discernible are Luke xxii. 44 and Heb. v. 7.—Cheyne, *Encyc. Bib.*, Art.: "Cross."

[2] I cannot agree with Keim that Pilate had insolently given Him these associates to anger the Jews; I am not at all sure that this association would not rather gratify their hatred. It was "the custom at Jerusalem to execute great criminals at the

this! He that had been "separate from sinners" is now identified with them. And why was He "numbered with the transgressors" and publicly branded as one of the vilest of mankind? Was it not that we might be numbered with the saints?[1] They are treated all alike: each carries his cross-beam; each, it may well have been, also carried a board, suspended from his neck, a board smeared white with ~~gypsum or~~ chalk, on which the crime for which he suffered was stated, and this board was subsequently affixed to the cross; we know it as the "title." They have an escort; four soldiers, it would seem, guarded each of the three, and there was a centurion[2] or captain, with ~~his *vitis*~~, his little rod of

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Feasts," and Pilate seems to have merely embraced this opportunity of putting them to death. Nor can I hold that Pilate crucified the robbers and left it to the Jews to crucify JESUS at the same time; his soldiers conducted the execution, and he furnished the title and gave permission for the deposition of the body. But I do agree with Weiss as against Keim that there was no large force of soldiers (the latter suggests from sixty to one hundred and twenty men) to escort the procession and to maintain order; it was not needed: the people had desired CHRIST'S death. And such a force would, I think, have been mentioned.

[1] M. Henry.

[2] Not on horseback, as tradition represents him; Jerusalem does not lend itself to equitation, and in the East the horse was practically reserved for war.

office, in command; it may also be that, as on other occasions, a herald went before, proclaiming the crimes for which they suffered. Thus marshalled, the motley procession passed on its way through the unclean and narrow streets. Men have called that road the *Via Dolorosa*,[1] the "way of sorrow," and with good reason, alike because of its suffering and its shame. It is only of the latter that I will speak here. Think of it! Our LORD and our GOD passed close to the doors and lattices of the houses; any one could spit upon Him or curse Him, or even cuff Him, and it would be strange if in that age none did that. And I suspect that in such cruelties He was *preferred* to the transgressors: He would attract more remark, more ill-usage than the robbers. And this they did to the man who "did no sin" and had "gone about doing good"; this was His recompense for having loved us with an everlasting love. Even when they spat on Him, or smote Him, His compassionate heart still yearned over them, and He pressed on, along His

[1] It is quite impossible to trace their route. Many of the "Holy Places" assume that Jerusalem is now as it was in our LORD'S day, whereas the ground as He trod it lies beneath a heap of *débris*, in some cases seventy feet deep—the city has been *seventeen* times taken by siege since He died there. Even Roman London lies some seventeen feet below the present level of our streets. "The remains of the first century are for us, for the most part, practically buried" (Sanday, p. 10).

path of shame, fortified by the remembrance that He was suffering for their and for our salvation. I say, "He pressed on," but He could not do that long; His strength, what was left of it, soon gave way; He could carry the cross no longer: is that to be wondered at when you remember what He had gone through, the sweat as of blood, and the buffetings, and the mockery and the marches and counter-marches? add to which that He was probably fainting for lack of food. So He cannot bear up any longer; He presently staggers, and perhaps falls, under His load.[1] We are told that He started "*bearing* His cross"; then we shortly read that "they *bore Him*"; that is to say, they had to sustain Him, to carry Him to His doom, for apparently He could not well stand or walk alone. But what is to be done with the cross-beam? No Jew would touch it, for they held it accursed and unclean; no soldier would carry it; it was not his work, nor was a Roman "allowed to carry the infamous wood."[2] ~~Well,~~ they were lawless days; they must find some one to bear it. And at the city gate—for there it was, apparently, that our REDEEMER stumbled,

[1] If our SAVIOUR did not actually *sink* under His burden, His weakness would delay the progress of the procession.—So Keim.

[2] Renan.

or fell, "as they were going out"—they found a stranger coming out of the country. They know not who he is,[1] but he has no friends: they seize him, they "lay hands on him" as he passes by, and compel him, they "commandeer" him, to bear the cross after JESUS. And a blessed burden it was! For one thing, it has immortalized him; for some nineteen centuries his name and nation have been known throughout Christendom. Of how many kings and princes and conquerors have the very names perished, but who does not know that the man who was privileged to bear CHRIST'S cross for Him was Simon, "Simon the Cyrenian"?[2] But, unless we greatly mistake, that burden was blessed in another way. For we hear more about him: St. Mark tells us that he was "the father of Alexander and Rufus." And who were they? They must have been disciples, otherwise there would be no reason for this mention of their otherwise obscure names. So we gather that they,

[1] That they fixed on Simon because they knew or suspected him to be a *disciple* appears to me to be most improbable. To begin with, he was a foreigner, and, moreover, what would Roman or Syrian soldiers know about our LORD'S followers?

[2] Renan suggests that Simon himself furnished these particulars to the historian. "No disciple," he says, "was at this moment near to JESUS." Perhaps not, but any one could see that some man carried CHRIST'S cross in His stead, and the disciples would soon learn who that was.

and doubtless their father before them, were brought, through this cross-bearing, to the faith and the peace of CHRIST.[1] Ah, how Simon would resent this gross insult at the time! He little knew with what blessed consequences it was fraught for him and his seed.

"He carried the cross after JESUS." And that is what we, too, are called upon to do; we are to take up our cross daily and follow Him, or we cannot be His disciples. "No cross, no crown!" But where is the mark of the cross in our lives? Is it not difficult to discover it? We were marked with it in our baptism, that it might be stamped upon our conduct. And the world often says that it cannot discover it there: it says that we are not true to our profession, "which is to follow the example of our SAVIOUR CHRIST and to be made like unto Him." "I have nothing," said a free-thinker, "against the religion of the New Testament, but I cannot find it anywhere." We might carry the cross not only after CHRIST, but *for* CHRIST, and we decline to do it. Nay, we sometimes, by our apostasies, thrust the cross upon Him; we put Him to an open shame.

But one alleviation of His misery our gracious MASTER had as He passed along to His death—so we

[1] It is a curious coincidence, to say the least, that we find a Rufus amongst the disciples at Rome (Rom. xvi. 13).

gather from St. Luke, "the Evangelist of compassion." He had it in the lamentations, in the loud commiseration, of some compassionate women. For a great crowd followed in the wake of the procession, and in that crowd were many women, and some of these, at least, bewailed His hard fate; possibly the little group of women from Galilee broke out into sobbing and so started the rest. They had every reason to bemoan Him, for He had been women's steadfast friend; He had blessed their children; He had denounced the way in which they were too often divorced at men's caprice; He had stood by the woman taken in adultery, or had rescued her from her accusers; He had been the champion of the poor and sick and helpless; they knew nothing but good of Him. And now they saw Him, despite these good deeds, condemned to death; they saw Him accounted an evil-doer: is it any wonder that they should weep for Him? Ah, it is well that we should remember the part that woman played, as compared with man, as compared even with the apostles, in the crucifixion—

> "Not she denied her GOD with recreant tongue,
> Not she with traitorous kisses round Him hung;
> She, while apostles shrank, could danger brave;
> Last at His cross and earliest at His grave." [1]

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[1] E. S. Barrett.

They bewailed and lamented Him. Please observe in passing that He who wept by the grave of Lazarus, and wept over Jerusalem, does not weep for Himself. I have seen a picture in a Latin convent of the Man of Sorrows, with the tears streaming down His face, but the Evangelists afford us no warrant for such a portrait. No, *He* does not bewail His lot, nor does He have any solace or sympathy from the *men*, many of whom had witnessed His wonderful works. Nay, we hear nothing of any *disciples* in the crowd—but the women, more tender-hearted, more just and discriminating, yielded Him the tribute of their tears. But see what He says to them, for He who had been silent before Herod and Pilate speaks to *them*. I cannot doubt that He was grateful to them, for they alone had showed Him any mercy, but He does not say so. No, because matters of greater moment occupied His mind. He would not have them weep for Him, but for themselves and their children, because of the terrible days that are coming on Jerusalem, and the still more terrible times of the "dreadful day of judgement." So He turns to them—that shows that He was not now carrying His cross—and He says that the days will come when the childless wife will be envied, when those who have borne children will tremble and fear for them and will call on the moun-

tains and hills to cover them. It is no threat, this, but a prophecy of coming tribulation, for[1] this crime now being consummated will inevitably bring its retribution. They are not, therefore, to waste their sympathy on Him: they need it more for themselves. Again He teaches us in this awful hour, amid His manifold sufferings and disgrace, to think of others, to care for others. And as He preaches this sublime lesson, the procession, it would seem, reaches Golgotha, the place of the execution.

But where was Golgotha? Ah, that no man knows. The name, "Skull-place," affords us no clue. It has been thought to point to a mound or "green hill" in the shape of a skull, but "no such rock or hill is known to have existed." Still less could any place be so called because human skulls were found lying about there: the Jews would not suffer such defiling things to remain unburied. Perhaps it owed its name to the ancient belief that Adam's skull was buried there, at the centre of the earth, as Jerusalem was supposed to be. But neither the name nor the spot are of any great moment: "all that GOD willed that we should know of Golgotha is that it was without the gate"[2]:

[1] Renan, of course, holds that the words were written after the siege.

[2] Farrar, ii. 399.

what concerns us is the message which comes to us thence, for, indeed, "its line is gone out through all the earth and its words to the end of the world."

But, first, you ought to know that we cannot be certain as to the exact order of the proceedings, still less the precise details of the crucifixion—such details it never occurred to the Evangelists to give us. All the same, we are sure *in the main* as to what was done. For one thing, CHRIST was stripped of His raiment; it is hardly likely that they left Him a rag to cover His nakedness.[1] I suspect that His coat was now a coat of many colours, because it was suffused with His blood, but, whatever it was like, it was taken from Him and with His other garments was laid aside for a time: the soldiers will share these, their perquisites, later on. For another thing, they brought Him a stupefying draught—"wine mingled with myrrh": St. Matthew says, "mingled with gall," perhaps because myrrh has the bitter taste of gall, probably because "gall" is the word used by the psalmist. This was almost the solitary act of mercy showed to Him in His terrible suffering. "Give strong drink," says the Book of Proverbs, "to him

[1] "Artemidor attests the nudity of those who were crucified—γυμνοὶ γαρ σταυροῦνται . . . The Fathers Athanasius, Ambrose and Origen speak of His perfect nudity."—Keim, p. 149 *n*.

that is ready to perish"—a precept which the Jews, after their manner, interpreted literally: they administered a cordial, a soporific to condemned criminals; we are told that the ladies of Jerusalem charged themselves with this office: if so, it is another of the charities which women bestowed upon our LORD: the draught was probably given to the soldiers, and they administered it to the two robbers. But not to our SAVIOUR, for when He had tasted it and had realized its properties, He would not drink it; He would suffer the pain rather than have His faculties dulled. Dr. Samuel Johnson, I may say, did much the same, so, too, did Maria Theresia, Empress of Austria: as she lay dying in great pain, her physician prescribed an anodyne, a narcotic of some kind, but she declined it, for, she said, "I will meet my GOD awake." I apprehend that a like idea was in our blessed LORD'S mind.[1] And there is a lesson here for *our* physicians. How often are the last moments of the dying spent in unconsciousness, just to save them pain, when they need all their faculties to face their past and make their peace with GOD: the soul surely comes before the body. Then came the crucifixion, properly so-called, the fixing of the body to the cross. If, as I

[1] "He preferred to quit life with perfect clearness of mind." —Renan.

have supposed, the upright part of the cross was already in its place, the cross-piece only would be laid on the ground, and to this the hands were nailed: there may also have been cords round the wrists.[1] The cross is much misrepresented in pictures: it was probably nothing like so high as we are accustomed to think: perhaps seven or eight feet altogether,[2] in which case the feet would not be more than ten or twenty inches from the ground. You can see what a difference this makes; our LORD'S sacred body was thus within reach of spitting and buffeting, and the Jews could almost shout their taunts and reproaches into His ears. The body probably rested astride a projecting piece of wood, the *sedile*, or seat, it was called; it could not "rest upon nothing but four great wounds"; and it is not at all clear that there was any ledge to support the feet. When the hands were attached to the cross-beam, that would be raised, with its precious burden (they would need a ladder), and dropped into a sort of socket or groove prepared to receive it; then the feet would be nailed to the post—that they were nailed is not expressly stated,

[1] Several writers mention that, among the Egyptians, cords were used, but at Rome and at Carthage nails.

[2] It was, however, so high that it needed a reed to reach His mouth.

but we infer it from His own words, "Behold My hands and My feet.[1] This, we may reasonably conjecture, was, in the main, the agonizing process which is comprehended in those few words, "They crucified Him"; they fastened Him to the cross. And it was, to all appearance, during these proceedings, during these tortures, that our SAVIOUR spoke for the first time. And His first word was, as you know, a prayer that His persecutors might be pardoned.[2] Racked

[1] St. Luke xxiv. 39.

[2] Weiss presumes (p. 364) to rob us of this prayer—he says St. Luke only *interprets the mind* of CHRIST—on these, to me, extraordinary grounds: (1) That He Who had commanded His disciples to pray in secret was not likely to let His tormentors hear Him praying, and (2) that the crowd was denied all access to the cross, and therefore that none of His disciples could have heard the words. That none of the disciples, *not even one of the women*, were near enough to catch His words, is pure conjecture. But what if that was so? others heard and could report them; perhaps the centurion or the soldiers. As to (1) it is unworthy of notice. And he presently (p. 367) includes the other "words" in a like condemnation. "No one," he says, "was permitted to approach them (the crucified) sufficiently near to catch the dying words from their exhausted lips." In like manner, Keim (p. 147) says that troops surrounded the spot, which no one was allowed to approach. As to which I remark that this contention (1) contradicts the whole gospel story, (2) is destitute of all proof, (3) makes no allowance for the clear sharp air of the East, nor (4) for any concessions made to the women. These latter, it is true, at first stood beholding afar off (Matt. xxvii. 55), but afterwards they appear close to the cross. And see note, p. 217, below.

with pain, out of the depths of His agony, possibly whilst they were hammering the pitiless nails into His hands, He cried—

"FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO."

"Father, forgive them!"—we must not proceed with the story until we have well considered these memorable words, for we may be sure that the "seven words" of our dying MASTER and LORD have a special significance for us. "The cross," ~~says Bellarmine~~, "was made the pulpit for preaching." The world has ever attached great weight to the last words of its distinguished men—such words are often both pregnant and characteristic. And these are the dying words of Him Who spake as never man spake: this is the legacy of the Divine Teacher to mankind; this He said as He suffered death for our redemption. If we are to "remember the words of the LORD JESUS" (Acts xx. 35), how can we forget or undervalue these? Let us ask, therefore, in lowliest reverence, what we may learn from this fruit of His lips. I think we may gather these six lessons at least.

1. "I give myself unto prayer"—in the original (Ps. cix. 4) there are but two words: "I . . . prayer." So the psalmist said in *his* time of persecution and

defamation. And if our blessed LORD does not say it, it is because He simply does it. "He does not say, 'I will not complain of you to the Father; I will pray for you,' but He prays at once."[1] His refuge in the time of trouble is prayer. He has long been silent; to charges and calumnies He has "answered nothing"; when He does speak it is to pray. Be it ours to follow His example. "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help." If GOD should give us our senses in the article of death, how can we better employ them than in prayer?

2. But CHRIST'S prayer, you will observe, was not for Himself, but for others: He intercedes with GOD "for the transgressors." He is thinking of their salvation; even in His bitter anguish He is unselfish and beneficent. And here is a message for us, for our prayers are often all about ourselves—ourselves and our families: it is our needs alone, or our sins alone, that we bring before GOD; if you watch your private prayers you will find that this is so.[2] In His dying prayer CHRIST preaches the widest, largest charity and compassion.

[1] Stier.

[2] "How much of private prayer," asks Mr. Frederic Harrison, "seeks for any good thing for others, at least outside the immediate circle of our kith and kin?"

3. For, indeed, for whom was it that He interceded? It was for His persecutors, His murderers; for the men who were even then doing Him to death. Not for Annas and Caiaphas: not, perhaps, for Pilate and Herod, but for the soldiers, who were their tools, and for the "common people." I have said that His prayer shows His charity, but how sublime was that charity: it embraced those who were killing Him. We could expect nothing else, for this is what He had preached to His disciples, "Pray for them that persecute you." So He does what He charged others to do; His prayer agreed with His precept. Our prayer must fulfil His precept; we must intercede for our bitterest enemies. It can be done, for Christians have done it. St. Stephen did it: "LORD," he cried, "lay not this sin to their charge." And thousands, taught by CHRIST'S prayer, have done the same. In the days of the Terror—to give a recent example—the little son of Louis XVI. scratched this petition on the walls of his prison: "O GOD, have pity on those who have killed my father and my mother." He had learnt it from our compassionate LORD.

4. And now, observe what it is that He asks for them. It is the principal thing—pardon. That is the first thing that we all need: "First, be reconciled"; "Father, forgive them"; "Forgive us our trespasses."

5. Yes, but we learn from this prayer, that Almighty GOD cannot pardon everybody. He cannot pardon the impenitent, for example; it would be wrong were He to do so. Why did our SAVIOUR, indeed, pray for these His murderers? Because, "they know not what they do." We are not to pray GOD to forgive wilful and conscious transgression: we are warned that, "if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth"—in other words, when we "know what we do"—"there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin." And St. Paul tells us, you remember, that he obtained mercy because he "did it ignorantly in unbelief." The mercy which our MASTER here asks for, He begs it for *unconscious* offenders, and such, alas! we have not always, perhaps not often, been: how true are those words—

> "I am not worthy in the dust
> Before Thy cross to lie;
> My guilt is more than that of those
> Who shouted 'Crucify.'
> Alas, they knew not what they did;
> I know well what I do,
> When by my sins I crucify
> The Son of GOD anew."

6. And, lastly, let us observe that this prayer is addressed to the Father, CHRIST'S Father and ours. It was JESUS CHRIST that taught us the fatherhood

of GOD: He bade us say "Our Father," and what He preached, He practised. Have you ever observed how often the name of "Father" was on His lips; how it coloured His whole life; how that thought was His comfort in His Passion?—twice in the course of these short seven words, He uses that dear name. And we, too, address our prayers to a Father. He loves us—how could He fail to love us when "we are His offspring," the children of His heart? Is it asked, "Why does He ask the Father to forgive when, as He Himself told us, the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins?" The only answer to that question which I can give is this: that the crucifixion was a crime—*the* crime of high treason—against the Father, who had sent the Son to be the SAVIOUR of the world. They had said, "This is the Son; come, let us kill Him, and the inheritance shall be ours."

Such was the first word, this word of prayer. And that prayer was not in vain; it was heard and was answered forthwith. The dying thief and the centurion were among its first-fruits; they knew not what they did. It bears fruit still, for His prayers are eternal: "their sound is gone forth into all lands, and their words to the end of the world." "Thy word, O LORD, endureth for ever in heaven." Our Great High Priest,

passed into the heavens, prays unceasingly for those who unconsciously crucify Him afresh.

And now that we have heard His pitying, pleading voice, let us picture the scene at and around His cross. Let your eye rest for a moment on the title. If CHRIST had not carried the rough tablet smeared with white and with its black letters, somebody had brought it, and it is now fixed above His head. It is written in three languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—for it was a polyglot crowd that came up to keep the Feasts. We cannot be sure as to what those three sentences exactly said, but this we do know, that they all proclaimed Him "the King of the Jews"; they were alike in that particular,[1] and that is the essential thing. Of course, it was in mockery and disgust and deep vexation—vexation that the Jews had compelled Him to this crime—that Pilate so described our LORD[2]: this was part of his revenge,

[1] Much has been made out of the divergencies in the title, as given by the Evangelists. But it is to be remembered (1) that the three languages leave room for three slightly different titles, (2) that two of these were, so to speak, translations, and (3) that the writers of the Gospels never pretended to verbal accuracy. Alford observes that "Latin was the official language, the Greek that usually spoken, the Hebrew (*i. e.* Aramaic) the language of the common people."

Farrar thinks that Pilate may have meant that this was the noblest of the Jews. But see St. John xviii. 33, xix. 3, 14, etc.

but it was a true description all the same. For is not JESUS CHRIST "the King of the Jews"? Would He not still be that if He were a mere man? Has any Jew that we wot of even distantly approached Him in moral grandeur and nobility? Does He not now tower head and shoulders above His race? There are thousands of Jews at this day who will not have Him to reign over them, but He *does* reign, by the very beauty of His life and character, all the same. Compare Him with the modern Jew—the Jews as we know them: compare their conceptions and ideas and actions, and also ours, with His, and you must pronounce Him our prince and king. We have been told that

> "The honest man, though ne'er so poor,
> Is king of men for all that."

But much how more is that title due to the crown and flower of our humanity, the man of Nazareth. Ah, Pilate was in some sense a prophet; perhaps the finger of GOD was in it, and the same hand guided him that wrote on the plaster of the wall at Babylon. And he refused to modify the title. For, of course, it mortified the Jews; it was meant as an insult, and they understood it as such, and it poisoned their success, and, therefore, they strove to have it altered. "Write not," they said, "'the King of the Jews,' but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews'"—you see

their triumph was turned into contempt. But their protests were unavailing: the procurator was immovable: "What I have written," he replied, "I have written." Yes, and that, too, was a truer word than Pilate dreamed of. He merely meant that his words should stand, but we may remember that all our words and all our writings "stand fast for ever and ever"; there is no altering, no recalling them; even Immortal GOD cannot recall the past. It is this that makes life so serious, so responsible. But from the title let us turn to the soldiers. Their task was completed for the present, so there is a lull in the proceedings: they have but to guard the three crucified men; they may sit down, sit on the ground and await the end. The blow on the breast which the Romans sometimes gave in mercy, to hasten the end, was omitted in this case—omitted, one of the ancients[1] assures us, to gratify Jewish malice. But, stay, there is yet something to be done; they may now divide the spoil, for the clothing of the condemned was their perquisite. So they take His garments—they were not of purple and fine linen, ~~as ours sometimes are~~ He had not lived in kings' houses—they were, I imagine, of the coarsest texture, but such as they are they will share them, and this they proceed to do. All but

[1] Origen.

His coat, or *cetoneth*—in shape like a dressing-gown—that was of one piece, "woven from the top throughout," and we are told that this very circumstance betrays its poverty, for a better garment would have had its seams.[1] It would spoil it to divide it, so they cast lots for it—how we do not know: probably the lot was cast into the lap; if dice were used, the soldiers may have rattled them in a helmet; anyhow one of the four, later in the day, would carry off this crimsoned caftan as his booty. St. John reminds us of the language of Ps. xxii., 18: "They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture did they cast lots." Of course, it added to His shame, if anything could add to that now; it proclaimed His abject helplessness and dereliction. But I see, and His disciples would see, a still greater shame in His companions in misery. His cross stood between two others,[2] and each of these bore a robber, and *His* prominence would stamp Him as the leading criminal,

[1] Some authors take an opposite view and speculate on its richness and value; some have even suggested that it must have been a gift on the part of one or other of the devout women who ministered unto Him of their substance. So Weiss, p. 365, who remarks on the aspect of bitter mockery which the lottery would have for the disciples.

[2] It does not follow that it was *taller* than the others. Farrar, who assumes this as certain, goes on to say, quite truly, that it was "but a little raised above the earth."

as if "the great SAVIOUR were the greatest sinner."[1] Ah, but have we not here a foreshadowing of the judgement-day, when some will be set on His right hand and some on His left. Not that His disciples would then remember His words[2] about the sheep and the goats: their bewildered minds could only think of His agony and the bitter shame of it all. I have spoken of a lull in the proceedings; you must not misinterpret these words: it was a respite for the soldiers, but none for the Sufferer, for now the spectators, and even the passers-by, plied Him with jeers and reproaches. St. Luke, indeed, tells us that "the people stood gazing upon Him," and some of them, no doubt, silently: it was an amazement to them to see the prophet who had wrought so many wonders, and who a few days before had been acclaimed as a king, reduced to this extremity, and some may have stared at Him with deep misgivings, afraid of some terrible retribution. But it was enough for the rest that He was powerless; they had no fears: to them He was an impostor who had wrought His miracles by magic or devilry, and they thought they did GOD service by reviling Him. And, of course, foremost with their gibes and insults were the Chief Priests and rulers: the religious leaders led the rest with

[1] M. Henry. [2] St. Matt. xxv. 33.

their venomous taunts. Oh, the brutal cruelty of it, for "a dying man, though an infamous man, should be treated with compassion"[1]; it shows what intense hatred our LORD'S pure life and teaching had engendered in them. Had He not called them hypocrites and vipers and blind guides? Now their turn had come: they held Him in their grasp, they would repay Him with interest. And we observe that their taunts took the form of challenges, so sure were they of their ground.[2] "Ah," they cried, "Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself." Nay, see what they do: they *allow* His miracles of healing. "He saved others"—they had no doubt on that score—"Himself He cannot save." They even speak of His faith and hope in GOD. "He trusted in GOD," they cried—and what a tribute it was to His piety—"let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." Then they make Him a fair offer. "If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him." What, they would argue, could be more reasonable? What better test could they propose? He has but to wrench Himself free, and they will forthwith accept

[1] M. Henry

[2] "The most certain fact connected with these bitter hours of JESUS is His foes' triumphant scorn."—Keim, p. 152.

Him as their MESSIAH. And why did He not take them at their word? He *could not:* His love chained Him to the cross. You remember Nehemiah's reply to Sanballat and the rest: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."[1] *He* was doing a great work: He must, therefore, endure these revilings; He must appear impotent on the cross of shame; they must be allowed to triumph over Him. We are told that He was "crucified through weakness."[2] He was also crucified through the strength of His inexhaustible love; these cruel taunts only moved Him to a great pity and to prayer. And they fell upon Him from every side: "all the voices rang with blasphemy and spite"—there was not one word of mercy—"no one did what was often done for friends and benefactors; no one entreated with lamentations that JESUS might be taken down."[3] And if the Sanhedrists scoffed the loudest, the soldiers contributed their quota; so did the rabble—"the very abjects came together against" Him, "making mouths and ceased not"; so, it would seem, did both the robbers; one certainly did,[4] perhaps in "the madness of His anguish." But after a while the other, touched,

[1] Nehem. vi. 3. [2] 2 Cor. xiii. 4. [3] Keim.

[4] The word used of both robbers is ὠνείδιζον (Mark xv. 32), whereas of the impenitent thief it is said, ἐβλασφήμει.

perhaps, by CHRIST'S superb dignity and patience—for (need we say it?) He

> "Nothing common did or mean
> Upon that memorable scene"

—a patience so different from what men might have expected; for "stern warriors," we are told, "when on the cross, sobbed; nay, in the distraction of their pain, made disclosures, cursed, railed against and spat upon their accusers and judges and those who were looking on"[1];—or else moved by His prayer for His murderers, rebuked his companion; and not only so, but he turned to our dying King for help. Ah, CHRIST had that triumph, that consolation! Helpless as He seemed to be, and powerless to meet the taunts of His adversaries, yet this brigand recognized Him as a king and addressed Him as such. "JESUS," he cried, "remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." Then it was that our gracious LORD spoke for the second time, and His second word was this—

> "TO-DAY THOU SHALT BE WITH ME IN PARADISE."

Before we consider, however, the message which

[1] Keim, p. 164.

this word has for us, I think it well to say that we cannot be positive as to the exact order of these seven cries from the cross. The received order, which places this promise second, is probably as near the truth as any, but still, we have no certainty: it is quite possible, for example, that what we call the third word, "Woman, behold thy Son," preceded this promise.[1] But it should cause you no surprise to discover that this uncertainty exists. You must remember that, of the four Evangelists, only St. John was near enough to the cross to catch our SAVIOUR'S words, and he for only a part of the time. And that circumstance may account for the fact that St. Matthew and St. Mark only record *one* saying of our LORD'S, the fourth: that was a loud cry, and St. Peter may have heard it himself, for I feel sure that he witnessed the crucifixion, but from a distance. St. Luke gives three other words, which were probably reported to him by the women who had crept close to the cross: St. John three more, which the others had omitted. But something more has to be said: if all the four Evangelists had been on the spot, and had heard everything, I question whether they could have sworn the next day as to the order of these utterances: we sometimes, I think, forget that people

[1] Lange (p. 305) accounts this the second word.

whose minds are tortured and agonized, as those of the disciples must have been, do not, cannot, pay much heed to such details. And we have not lost anything through this uncertainty: whatever their *order*, the words are preserved to us, and their lessons are the same. And the lessons of this second word —if it was the second—let me now attempt to put them before you. I will mention these four—

1. In the first word our SAVIOUR spoke as a suppliant: He petitions the Father for mercy and forgiveness. Now He speaks as a prince, as a judge; He has power in heaven and earth; He has the "keys of death and of Hades." Powerless He may *seem* to be, but it is not so. Power has come even through His Passion: because He has become obedient unto death, the death of the cross, therefore GOD hath highly exalted Him. He is already a royal giver. He assures this penitent of a place with Him in Paradise.

Again, the first word had to do with forgiveness; this has to do with absolution, for it *conveys* absolution; it is as if He said, "Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee." So He teaches us again that "the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

2. But consider, in the second place, who it is that He absolves. It is a man who but recently was a

robber, a highwayman, an offender against all law and order, one of the enemies of the human race. This man was a criminal, a felon, who, on his own showing, had merited crucifixion ; it was, he says, a just recompense, "the due reward of his deeds." Yet he is forgiven, and Paradise is promised him. As he was near to Christ then, so he should be near to Him in the unseen world. What a change! from the racking pains and manifold miseries of the cross to the peace and rest of Abraham's bosom. What was a crown or a kingdom to such a boon as this!

And see what follows from this promise. If *he* was pardoned, then none need despair. Have we sinned as deeply as this robber had done; still there is mercy for us, for GOD has no favourites. No, none need despair, but as little may any one presume. And men do presume, and on the strength of this example, too. They positively cite the great mercy of GOD in this case as an excuse for their continuance in sin ; they use it as a weapon to fight Him with. But they greatly misread this history; they pervert it to their own destruction. For, in the first place, this robber was repentant and they are not; he must have been repentant, or he could not have been forgiven. In the next place, it was, so far as we can

gather, his first chance, and he eagerly embraced it. *He* had not been called by CHRIST again and again, and each time turned a deaf ear to the call; he reverenced Him and prayed to Him as soon as he knew Him and heard His words. In the last place, as his guilt had been excessive, so his faith was exceptional. For this cause, perhaps, he obtained mercy, that in him might JESUS CHRIST show forth all His longsuffering. To him was this grace given—for faith "is the gift of GOD"—to recognize the power and glory of our LORD in the hour of His humiliation, amid the horrors of crucifixion. CHRIST was being crucified, and he was being crucified himself, yet he is able to confess Him there and then; he speaks confidently of His "kingdom."[1] How different from all this is a deathbed repentance! There is mercy, it is true, for every dying soul, if it will turn in humble penitence and heartfelt faith to GOD, but we have no promise that it *will* turn; no assurance that the grace of repentance or of faith will be given. Most men, you will find, "die as they have lived"; they reap what they have sowed; when death comes, they have no

[1] It is not surprising that he should use that word when the title mockingly proclaimed our LORD "the King of the Jews." Or, if he could not read that writing, he could *hear* the rulers saying, "Let the King of Israel now descend from the cross."

concern about "the things which make for their peace"; such things are "hid from their eyes."

3. A third reflection is that our LORD, in His mercy, gives to us "exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think"; He gives "more than either we desire or deserve." It was a modest petition, this request of the dying robber: "Remember me," he cried—not "reward me"; not even "save me"—"when Thou comest in Thy kingdom." He asks for a kind protecting thought from CHRIST in that future and, perhaps, far-off day when He shall have succeeded to His throne. That was all! But consider our LORD'S reply: He corrects him at every turn; in every particular He goes far beyond the man's wildest hopes. "*Remember* me," he had said: to this it was replied, "Thou shalt *be with Me*"—in My presence, at My side. "When Thou *comest*," said the robber: "*To-day*," rejoins our REDEEMER. "In Thy *future kingdom*," was the cry of the former: "In *Paradise*," is the reply of the latter. Oh, the depth both of the mercy and graciousness of GOD! He gives not according to our poor and faltering requests, but according to His royal bounty. "The greatest Being in the world is the greatest giver." What a commentary it is on that promise, "Ask, it shall be given you." And this idea finds its echo, its ex-

pression, in one of Wordsworth's sonnets. "I knelt," he says—

> "I knelt before Thy gracious throne
> And prayed for peace with suppliant knee,
> And peace was given: *not peace alone,*
> *But hope and joy and ecstasy.*"

4. But these words contain yet another instruction for us and one "very necessary for these times." We are reminded here that we do not go to heaven when we die, but to Paradise, to the Intermediate State. I say "reminded," because our SAVIOUR has taught us the same truth before. For example, He has told us of a day of judgement, a day when He will sit upon His throne and divide the sheep from the goats and assign to every man his place and portion; when He will say to some, "Come, ye blessed . . . inherit the kingdom prepared for you," and to others, "Depart, ye cursed." But how *can* He say that, if men are in heaven or hell already? Nay, what place is there for a day of judgement if men have been judged and rewarded already? Again, He spoke of Lazarus as in "Abraham's bosom," and of the rich man as "in Hades." But to the Jews who heard Him, "Abraham's bosom" did not mean heaven, nor did "Hades" imply hell—another word, "Gehenna," is used to designate that region. And Paradise, in

like manner, did not mean to the Jews what it means to most Christians—heaven. They used that word of the place of rest and refreshment, where pious souls abide in the hand of GOD, until the great day. But the last and the conclusive argument is this—that our Blessed SAVIOUR did not go that day, or for many days after that, to heaven ; on the contrary, we are told that He "went and preached to the spirits in prison"; forty days elapsed before He asecnded up on high. It was in Paradise that they met, He and His convert of the cross. It is to Paradise that pious souls will go, and go to be "with CHRIST," in rest, in refreshment, learning and, perhaps, serving till the trumpet sounds and the dead are raised. ~~And now~~, we must return to the history.

How long our SAVIOUR had hung upon the cross in pain and desolation we know not, when His fast-glazing eyes rested on a little group hard by. It is, He perceives, a group of friends, so that He is not wholly deserted, and it is apparently composed of one man and three or four women. I am glad for the credit of our sex that one man braved the danger—if there were more we do not hear of them, and I think we should have done, seeing that the names of the women are given—besides, the list seems to be exhaustive. One man and perhaps four women! and

"many other women," you will remember, viewed the crucifixion "from afar" (St. Mark xv. 41). We are sometimes reproached for the wide disproportion between the men and the women in our churches. Well, I think it can be accounted for; but all that I will say here is that it is no new thing that has happened to us; there was a like disproportion at the crucifixion; you might have asked *there*, "Where are the men?" Prominent in the group, if only by reason of her grief, was the Blessed Virgin His mother.[1] But how did she come to be there? It was no fit place for her. I imagine the answer to be that she *would* come. They had tried, I dare say, to

[1] Keim most arbitrarily, and yet most confidently, disallows this part of the history. Whilst complaining that the presence of the Galilean women at the cross "has been denied *with a senseless fanaticism* by the most recent critics," he denies himself the presence of our LORD'S mother. And on what grounds? Mainly on these—(1) That she was unbelieving, (2) that she did not go up to Jerusalem with JESUS, (3) that she had not lived with her Son, (4) that John was as yet too dependent to possess a house. Renan, on the other hand, accounts for the fact that Mary is not mentioned by the synoptists (whilst they do mention the others) on the ground that "at that moment JESUS no longer existed except for humanity." But a more probable account, as it appears to me, is that she had been removed soon after her arrival on the scene. Keim positively sees in St. John's account an attempt to point himself out as the genuine successor of JESUS, superior both to Peter and James.

dissuade her, but in vain: whatever it might cost her, even though the sword of which Simeon had spoken years before should pierce her soul, she would go and stand by Him: no one should say that His mother had failed Him in His hour of shame and anguish. She would be there, if it cost her her life. You see here what a mother's love can do! It may be that she remembered Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, who watched for months, day and night, by the impaled bodies of her sons; was she to be outdone in love by a Hittite woman? Or was she to be like Hagar, the Egyptian, who said, "Let me not see the death of my child"? I am not sure, however, that Mary's breaking heart could remember anything. In her agony of grief she could only remember that it was her Son, the son of her womb, who was being crucified. I am almost inclined to think that she expected at first that He would be delivered, for *she* knew, as others did not, the mystery of His birth; she knew that He was the Son of the Highest, and she also knew how great was His power and His wisdom, and she may have hoped accordingly, even after He was nailed to the cross, that He would come down before them all and so prove Himself to be the Son of GOD with power. But as the weary, awful moments passed, such hopes, if she had cherished them, grew

dim and she began to despair, and she may have testified her despair; it may have been a cry or a sobbing on her part that drew our LORD'S attention to the group. And I should like to suggest to you that her presence at the crucifixion may possibly account for that—I will not say of Mary Magdalene, for I believe that, in her great love, she would have been there in any case—for that of certain of the other women, the Virgin Mary's sister, for example; *she* may have been there, because she could not let the Virgin go through her ordeal alone. I do not suppose that they could draw near to the cross at first: the ground was then occupied by our LORD'S enemies; they were passing and repassing, and hurling their insults at Him. But, as the time sped on, the priests and rulers would weary even of that pastime, and there would be more space for St. John and the women to approach. They were on the spot, however, when our SAVIOUR spoke to the dying thief —I am now assuming that that was the second word. It was, I imagine, from the women that St. Luke gleaned this, as well as several other incidents. And after a while He sees them, and He knows that He is not altogether forsaken. But if a sword pierced blessed Mary's bosom then, no less did it stab our SAVIOUR'S heart: it would cause Him suffering to see her suffer,

to know what agonies she must be enduring. No, it is no place for her, and she must be removed; she must also be provided for. If He had not provided for her already, it must be because He had designed to provide for her now. And there stood by her side, perhaps supporting her, the disciple whom JESUS loved. He had deserved our LORD'S love, as we now perceive: he is "faithful among the faithless found"; he is there when Simon Peter and the rest are not; he was every way marked out as the one to be Mary's stay and comforter. So the dying CHRIST turns His blessed head towards the group—I conclude that He turned it, because I can hardly believe that they would take up their station right in front of the cross, in full view of the naked and tortured body; I think they would instinctively stand on one side—He looks His mother in the face—what a look of compassion that must have been!—and then turns from her to His dear disciple, and says (this is the third word)—

"WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON."

Then, addressing St. John, He adds—

"BEHOLD THY MOTHER."

And now let us meditate on these words, for, indeed, they have their gracious lessons. And the first is—

1. The glory and beauty of a mother's love. Is there anything more exquisite and touching in all the world? Love has been described as the greatest of all mysteries, greater than gravitation, greater than electricity or ether, and, perhaps, of all love, a mother's for her firstborn son is the strongest. Whence comes it that they have this yearning, clinging, absorbing affection? From the same hand that supplies the electricity and the luminiferous ether. "Love is of GOD"; love in every form! GOD gives that as He gives free-will, though we sometimes abuse it as we abuse free-will. GOD *is* love, and our love is a reflection of, an emanation from, His. We say it is human nature to love our children, but how does human nature come to be like that? If it is the product of evolution, then there must have been an evolver. Oh, let us ascribe love, which is the wine of life, and which, if it had its way, would make of this earth a Paradise, to its true author; let us bless the Father of Spirits for it; let us stand amazed and adoring at the beauty and strength of maternal tenderness.

> "If I were hanged on the highest hill,
> Mother o' mine, O, mother o' mine;
> I know whose love would follow me still,
> Mother o' mine, O, mother o' mine.

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
Mother o' mine, O, mother o' mine;
I know whose tears would come down to me,
Mother o' mine, O, mother o' mine.

If I were damned in body and soul,
Mother o' mine, O, mother o' mine;
I know whose prayers would make me whole,
Mother o' mine, O, mother o' mine."[1]

But this is a lesson which the Virgin teaches rather than the Crucified. But He, too, speaks to us, and His first message is that—

1. "GOD *works by means, and the chief means is man.*"[2] What did our SAVIOUR do for the mother who bore Him? How did He provide for her future? There was no miracle, nothing strange or supernatural. He gives her a protector in the person of one of His disciples—that is all. Some Christians will have it that she was later on taken up bodily into heaven, for that is what "the Assumption of the Virgin" means. The humble provision which her Divine Son made for her does not point to any such distinction. A second lesson is that of—

2. *Reverence for parents.* On His cross He echoes the ancient law, "Honour thy father and thy mother." Just as He, the Word made flesh, had been subject to His parents, so He now, by His example, preaches

[1] Kipling. [2] Bossuet.

love and respect for them. You may, perhaps, say that nature itself, or reason, teaches us that obligation —reverence for those from whom we have our very life—but you must surely have seen that that obvious duty needs to be insisted on, for the tie which binds the child to the parent is less strong or less efficacious than that which attaches the parent to the child, and children need to be reminded of their duty as parents do not. Moreover, we are always in debt to our parents; we can never repay them. Nor do they ask us to repay them; all they ask of us is respect, affection, and alas! they do not always get it.

3. But we also learn from Christ upon the cross to *make provision* for our parents, should occasion so require. If we have to leave them, we must not leave them in want; they have given us of theirs, and shall we deny them a share of ours? They will not want to take it; they will feel humiliated if they have to depend upon us, for they recognize readily enough that "the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." No, they will not want to take it, but I grieve to say that children are not always anxious to give the needful help; it is not an uncommon spectacle in this Christian land to see parents struggling with want and receiving parish pay when their children are

well-to-do. I believe that much more is done for parents in France than in England; it has been said, indeed, that more respect is shown to parents in Japan than in this country. And this when JESUS CHRIST calls to us from His cross to make provision for them!

Not, of course, that we have discharged our duty when we have provided for their wants. It is not a home only that they want, but our hearts. Have you observed what St. John did for our LORD'S mother? "From that hour," we read, "the disciple took her to his own"—his own! The word "home" has been supplied by the translator.[1] And no doubt he did receive her to his home, such as it was. But he gave her more than board and lodging; he yielded her the affection of a son; he took the Virgin Mother to his heart.

4. Another lesson that we learn from this word is that whilst "nature gives us but one mother, grace gives us many"[2]; that is to say, we find mothers and sisters in the Church of GOD; those who are in CHRIST form new and tender relationships: St. John gained a mother and the Virgin gained a son through the faith and cross of CHRIST. Because

[1] And that is no doubt the primary idea. See chap. xvi. 32.
[2] Bengel.

of our union with Him we have ties and affinities with one another. You remember His own most gracious words, "Whosoever shall do the will of GOD, the same is my brother and sister and mother." And in this respect the disciple is as his LORD. The common word to designate Christians in the first days was "the brethren," and women were "sisters." Yes, and some were also sisters *and* mothers: do you remember how St. Paul speaks of "Rufus, and his mother—*and mine*"? Oh, the pity of it! Christians and Church-people, though they worship at the same altars, are often entire strangers; they are partakers together of the same blessed bread and so are members of the "one body," and yet from year to year they never speak, never meet but in the church's aisle. Is it any wonder if the world does not believe in us or in our LORD, for He has Himself constituted love as the stamp and signature of His followers? "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

5. And here is another thought—that ties of spirit are stronger and closer than ties of flesh. We seldom think so: our idea is that "blood is thicker than water"; to most of us the bond of baptism counts for very little compared with kinship. But our LORD

and King would seem to have thought otherwise. He had "brethren" according to the flesh—possibly the sons of Joseph by a former marriage—but to none of these did He commit the care of His mother; at one time they did not believe on Him, and they were not near Him now. He entrusts her to a disciple, to the loving and beloved disciple. It has been thought, indeed, by some that St. John was our SAVIOUR'S cousin, but that is extremely doubtful, and if it were proven, we should still hold that he was chosen for this office, not because of cousinship, but because of discipleship. But if you are still sceptical as to these ties of spirit, then St. Paul should decide you: he tells us that the man who is joined to a harlot is one body, but he that is joined to the LORD is *one spirit;* he also teaches that by one Spirit we are baptized into CHRIST'S body and are made members thereof. True, we can see the outward ties and cannot see the spiritual bond, but "the things which are seen are temporal and the things which are not seen are eternal." And this consideration bears on a question which has a profound interest for many of us, namely, whether we shall recognize our friends in heaven. I suggest to you that in heaven our human relationships will seem of very secondary importance—not because we love our own flesh and blood any less, but

because we love our brethren in CHRIST still more. I do not say that those whom we have "known after the flesh" we shall know no more or care for no longer, but I apprehend that thoughts of flesh and blood—which "cannot inherit the kingdom of GOD"—will be absorbed, will be swallowed up, by our more sacred, because more spiritual and eternal, relationships.

6. And this is true, I take it, even of the relationship, all sacred and most blessed as it was, between our SAVIOUR and His mother; it was but a tie of flesh, and I submit to you that a great deal too much has been made of that tie, especially in the Latin Church. The body which He had of her was composed of material particles: it was wholly compounded out of the dust. The *cultus* of the Blessed Virgin finds no favour here, or elsewhere in the New Testament. True, she was the mother of our LORD, but who was it made her such? "Conceived of the Holy Ghost" comes before "Born of the Virgin Mary"—she was but the human vessel. And what are we taught here, but that our LORD'S earthly ties to her have come to an end? She is committed to the care of St. John, but not commended to the worship of the Church, nor are we committed to her patronage or to her intercession. She is "the Queen of heaven"; she is

"the co-Redemptress"; she is invoked to "use the authority of a mother and to command her Son." What a contrast between such wild and turgid language and our SAVIOUR'S, "Woman, behold thy son!"

But we must resume our station at the foot of CHRIST'S cross. If we are to take the words literally, "From that hour the disciple took her into his own home"—and why should we not take them literally?—then the Blessed Virgin was forthwith[1] led away from the harrowing scene by St. John; led away *sobbing*, for our SAVIOUR'S words would break her down completely. Not only because of His tender solicitude as to her future—that, of course, would touch her heart and start her tears: if, in her stony grief, she had been unable to weep before, she would weep then—but also because His words made it clear that He must die the death; if she had cherished hopes of an interposition, of a descent from the cross, this third word would extinguish them. And so I conclude that it was with cries and lamentations, pitiful to hear, that she was withdrawn—perhaps she

[1] Ellicott holds that the words "from that hour" imply that "the apostle at once and on the spot led away the Virgin Mother to his own home." St. John, he adds, would return during the darkness.

was persuaded to go against her own will; perhaps she perceived that her much-loved Son desired her to depart. And when she was gone, I think that He would breathe more freely; one part of His burden of care and suffering was removed, but, alas, what a load remained, for as the hours, nay, even as the moments, passed, His agonies would increase. And when I say "agonies" I am not thinking, and you must not think, of His bodily sufferings alone. Those sufferings would, no doubt, be intensified as the time went on; the fever in His blood would rise higher and higher; His lips would be more parched with thirst; perhaps His limbs would be more tortured with pain, but that physical pain was cast into the shade by the gloom and desolation which settled down upon His soul, and that gloom, that mental misery, would be enhanced by the darkness[1] which covered the land, perhaps as with a pall, from noon onwards—from twelve o'clock to three. It will not have escaped you that, whilst He was born in light and glory,[2] darkness enshrouded Him at His death. It is not stated, indeed, that this darkness was supernatural, but if it was, can you wonder at it? When the "Light of the

[1] Some of the Fathers (*e. g.* Tertullian) say that this darkness is attested by heathen writers.

[2] St. Luke ii. 9.

World" was gasping out His life: when the Creator of the world was judicially murdered, because He had loved righteousness and hated iniquity; when the Perfect Love gave up His soul to save sinners, can you wonder at such a portent? They had clamoured for a "sign from heaven"; they might have recognized one here. If He was only a martyr, it would astonish us, but if, as the centurion said, "This was the Son of GOD," then we expect signs and portents.[1] And I say that that "horror of thick darkness" was reflected in His mind and would burden His spirit. ~~It did something for Him, I allow; for one thing it hid His nakedness~~—they could no longer "stand staring and gazing" on His ~~virginal~~ body; for another thing, it seems to have silenced the jeers and challenges which had been hurled at Him before; it is reasonable to suppose that even the Chief Priests and scribes would be cowed with terror and would slink away as men ashamed when it grew dark at midday—we may say that "fearfulness and trembling" would "take hold upon them." Yes, He had *that* relief, but, on the

[1] I do not affirm that it *was* miraculous. "Any unusual darkening of the sky would naturally strike the imagination of the disciples" (Sanday, in Hastings, ii. 626). St. John may not have mentioned this phenomenon because it did not impress his imagination so much; he was probably more occupied (chap. xix. 27) than the others.

other hand, He was human, and that dense gloom would depress Him, as it would depress us in like circumstances. And it lasted for hours, for "three such hours as never were before since GOD created man upon the earth."[1] It has been held, I think by Luther, that during this period our LORD sustained all the tortures of the damned, the tortures which sin brings in its train. It is true that He knew no sin; it is also true that He was made sin for us. And we have a proof of the intensity of His mental sufferings in the agonized cry which, at the close of these three hours, broke from His lips. But this brings us to the fourth word—

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Before we meditate on the lessons of this awful cry, I think we ought to realize the position which it occupies among the seven words, for that position is somewhat exceptional. For one thing, it is the only word from the cross which either St. Mark or St. Matthew (who seems to have followed Mark in his account of the Passion) has recorded; for another, they both give it in its original form: "Eli, Eli," or "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" It may be that our

[1] M. Henry.

SAVIOUR'S other cries, like this, were in the Hebrew, or Aramaic, speech, which at that time was current, as well as the Greek, in Palestine, but if so, we only have them in their Greek form; that is to say, we only have translations of them, whereas this cry we hear just as the bystanders heard it. Or it may be, again —it is just possible—that the other sayings were spoken in Greek, and this alone in Aramaic.[1] But, whichever it was, this distinction challenges our attention. You remember how the Jews, when they heard that St. Paul "spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue" (Acts xxi. 40), gave the more earnest heed—"there was made a great silence": let us make a great silence in our souls; let us listen with awe and trembling whilst our dying MASTER cries to us in the tongue of His childhood, the tongue of His prayers, of His race and religion.

And what does He say to us in this "Jews' language"?

1. He takes us to the Psalms of David, for this is a quotation from Ps. xxii.; that psalm begins with these words.[2] It is significant that two out of the

[1] See p. 250 below.

[2] "These words he fetched from David's psalms, though He could have expressed Himself in His own words, to teach us what the Word of GOD is to us."—M. Henry.

seven words on the cross came from the Psalter. "Seven times He spake," and twice out of the seven He borrows the language of the Jewish hymn-book, the hymn-book which is bound up in the heart of our Bibles. So that He was, as you might expect, familiar with the Psalms; we learn that in other ways: He so often quotes them. But that is not all; these same Psalms were His stay and comfort in the time of trouble. A recent striking book, *The Psalms in Human Life*, tells us how the martyrs went to the stake with the words of these Hebrew hymns upon their lips. I remind you that the King of Martyrs did much the same; He turns to them in His crucifixion. And does he not thus teach us, in a very practical way, to have recourse to them in our times of trouble and to draw water out of these wells of salvation? I do not know where else, indeed, you will find words so comforting or so inspiring. "The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books," says Richard Hooker, "the Psalms do both more briefly contain and more movingly express." And here is another testimony from a living writer, and one who has suffered much.[1] "It was," he says, "when I was wretched, miserable and lonely that I first found the help that there was in the Psalms. . . . The sense of

[1] Mr. W. T. Stead.

their value rises with trouble. . . . Get into sharp, bitter trouble and care," ~~he adds~~, "and there is no reading in all the books in the world so healing and so helpful as that which is to be found in the Psalms." But what further need have we of witnesses when we find that "the Teacher come from GOD," the Eternal Word, borrowed the psalmist's language to express His griefs and hopes upon the cross?

2. But what was it more precisely that our SAVIOUR found in that treasury? Why, He draws upon the Psalter for His loud and bitter cry that He is abandoned in His last moments, abandoned by the Fount of mercy and pity; the "voice of His complaint" is that in the article of death GOD has deserted Him, has hid His face from Him. Thus it was that our CHRIST died, and how full of significance is that fact! There have been Christians, there are some such still, who make much of triumphant deathbeds. It is their ambition, they say, to "die shouting"; they despair of those who in death have doubts or fears. It may be well, therefore, for us to remember that our Lord Himself "died shouting," but shouting that He was forsaken. Ah, where was *His* assurance at that moment? There is no accent of triumph here! He walked in darkness and saw no light; He esteemed Himself "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted," and

yet we know that all the time He was the well-beloved of the Father and was accomplishing His gracious purpose—was never dearer than in that dark hour. No, we will not despair of those who have departed this life dismayed and distressed, nor will we suppose that the Almighty takes us at our own valuation, and that we are accepted because we say that we are accepted. Jesus Christ, the Son of His love, said that *He* was forsaken, if not forgotten.

3. And He said this, I must further observe, in that dying agony of His, when it was not really the case. It seemed to Him, in His tortured humanity, that He was cast off and rejected at the precise moment when He touched the highest point of His glory and beauty. He was *not* forsaken; GOD'S face was hidden from Him, but GOD was there—His own Godhead was there—"closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." Can any one here believe for a moment that the all-compassionate Father had forgotten or neglected His martyred CHRIST, neglected Him in His direst need, neglected Him in the hour of His splendid self-surrender? I tell you that GOD was never nearer than at that crisis, never more full of love and care. But the man CHRIST JESUS was permitted, that He might drain the cup of suffering to the dregs, to *feel Himself* forsaken; this sense of

utter dereliction was the culmination of all His sorrows. No, He was never for one moment forgotten. Of Him, too, was the prophetic word true: "Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me and the LORD hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child . . .? Yea, these may forget, yet will not I forget thee."[1] And again, "I hid My face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."[2] And no less are they true of ourselves. Not in the hour of death alone, but many a time and oft amid the changes and chances of this mortal life, we are tempted to think that GOD cares for us no longer. It ought to reassure us when we remember that the dying CHRIST, who doubtless knew, because He said, that He was not alone, but the Father was with Him and knew, because He said, that the Father heard Him always, *He* was still reduced in His extremity to appropriate the cry of the psalmist, "My GOD, my GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

4. One other thought: this agonized cry, wrung from His lips by the terrors and tortures of that death-struggle, was not wholly despairing; one ray of light illumines its thick darkness; one consolation remains: He can still claim the Immortal and

[1] Isa. xlix. 14, 15. [2] Isa. liv. 7, 8.

Almighty Power as *His* GOD; there is an echo here of another voice of the psalmist, "O GOD, thou art *my* GOD." If He is forsaken, as He seems to men to be, and as He has the sense of being, one comfort remains to Him: the Everlasting GOD stands where He did, and is His GOD. I should not wonder if those other words of the Psalter came into His mind: "This GOD is *our God* for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death."[1] "Eloi, Eloi": "My GOD." Ah, the Jew who spoke thus, whoever it was, like the King of Jewry Who borrowed his words, had a personal relation with the awful ~~and incommunicable~~ Godhead, such as, I fear, many Christians never realize. GOD was to him no abstraction, no absentee, "the recluse of the skies," far off and inaccessible. He was his possession, his treasure, his stay and helper. Do we walk in darkness and see no light? Do we pass through the valley of the shadow of death? This bright beam of light is always ours, that the one Eternal GOD is our GOD and Father, and that we are His creatures and His children.[2]

[1] Ps. xlviii. 14.

[2] I relegate to this note three observations which I desire to make with respect to the "Seven Words"—

1. That this fourth word is undeniably genuine; this, at least, CHRIST did say. Because no disciple would ever have *invented* such words for Him. Why ascribe to Him a confession of

But it is time that we turned to the fifth word, which followed, you will observe, immediately upon the fourth; we discover that from the circumstance that the mention of the sponge and the vinegar is

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failure and so seem to justify the taunts of the chief priests? And why concoct this story about Elias? It is such a *bathos*, and shows such ineptitude, that it derogates from CHRIST'S majesty.

2. That nothing has so far been alleged to show that the other words are spurious. On what grounds are they questioned? On such as this—that none of the disciples could have approached sufficiently near to the cross to hear what was said, exhausted as He was and feeble as His utterance would be. We ask *why* they could not approach, and we are told that the ground was enclosed by a force of soldiers who kept everybody at a distance. We ask for proof of this force—there is no trace of it in the text—and we find that it is pure conjecture—and *wild* conjecture. The crucified would sometimes live for three days; fancy a cordon of soldiers keeping watch all the time! Moreover, all that we know about that execution we learn from the Gospels, and they *exclude* the idea of lines of soldiery; they affirm that people could and did draw near.

3. That, even if we had to surrender the whole series as unhistorical or doubtful, we should only lose the *words*, not the *thoughts*. This the critics themselves allow. Renan, for example, who holds that "the last words attributed to JESUS are open to doubt," affirms that the prayer, "Father, forgive them," etc., was in his heart if not upon his lips, whilst Keim (p. 155) says much the same about the rest: "Every one"—these are his words—"is reluctant to lose these pearls from the lips of JESUS. But pearls they remain . . ." for "they are correct expositions of the latest emotions of the dying REDEEMER."

connected with the mention of Elijah. And here I will ask you to observe that while St. John alone has preserved for us that fifth word—

"I THIRST,"

both St. Matthew and St. Mark mention the rude attempt to slake His thirst, which mention is something like an "undesigned coincidence"; *they* say that He *was* athirst: another writer adds that He *spoke* of His thirst. And well He might do so, for among the physical sufferings of the cross, a raging, consuming thirst was, perhaps, the most harassing: the whole body would be in a high fever; the five wounds by themselves would cause acute inflammation. And what is it the wounded on the field of battle cry out for above everything? It is for water, and the wounded in war are not suspended for hours, as CHRIST was, between heaven and earth. And so identified was thirst with crucifixion that tyrants sometimes practised the barbarity of planting the cross hard by running water, in order to tantalize their victims. I suspect that all through the six, nay, the sixteen hours, our SAVIOUR had been tormented by thirst, and see! the soldiers had devised a substitute for the contiguous stream, for they "mocked Him, coming to Him, offering Him

vinegar,"[1] which, of course, means that they presented it and then withdrew it[2]; probably this was done at the time of their midday meal; they may even have pledged Him with their cup and invited Him to pledge them in return.[3] But the darkness would seem to have chastened their temper, or perhaps pity awoke, and so, five hours later, when He cries out in His thirst, either they or others—we cannot be sure which it was—look round for the means of giving Him a draught. Water, seemingly, there was none, but there was a flagon or pitcher containing some "vinegar"—we are probably to understand by that word the *posca* or acid mixture which they had brought with them to slake their own thirst—it was not wine.[4] He shall have some of this. But how are they to convey it to His lips? Probably they had a cup, but could not well raise it to His mouth. Some one sees a sponge—this sponge, it has been suggested, may have served as a stopper for the vessel, but I suspect that it was connected

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 36.

[2] Had they given our LORD to drink, it would have been charity and not mockery.

[3] Edersheim, ii. 594.

[4] Both Keim and Stier give citations to show that the "vinegar" is to be distinguished from wine. Renan observes that Roman soldiers had to carry *posca* with them on all their expeditions, among which a crucifixion would be counted.

with His blood; perhaps it was meant to wipe the hands of those who shed it; anyhow, they take it and dip it in the vinegar; then they rest it on a bunch of hyssop (some may have been growing hard by: it grows everywhere in Palestine, even in the crannies of walls[1]); they raise the hyssop by its stalk, which is commonly about eighteen inches long, and so they reach His parched and burning lips. And He "received the vinegar": some of it He was able to swallow and no doubt it afforded Him some assuagement. But let us contemplate this incident, for CHRIST'S thirst has its message for us.

1. And the first remark to be made is that this is the one solitary reference in the whole of the Passion-story which our SAVIOUR makes to His *physical* sufferings.[2] Of other sorrows—indignities, injustice and the like—He does speak, but never of His bodily pain. We often make the most of that, but He did not. And so His silence teaches us to bear our afflictions bravely; they are, He seems to say, but "light," and they last but "for a moment." No, we are not to be self-centred even in the throes of

[1] 1 Kings iv. 33.

[2] We may surely trace in this part of the narrative the hand of an eye-witness. And the very simplicity and artlessness of the record attest its veracity.

mortality. Our REDEEMER almost forgot His pain in seeking the profit of mankind.

2. And I find a second lesson in the thought that He only spoke of His thirst for a high religious reason. We have already seen that when they offered Him the stupefying draught, meant to dull His pains, He would not drink it; He would meet death awake. But now He *petitions* for something to drink: yes, and for a similar reason; He would meet death *alert*. For His bodily nature was like ours; He was constituted as we are, and we can neither think nor pray when we are devoured by thirst. So, no doubt, it was with Him; the fever in His blood dimmed His faculties; the torturing drought obscured His vision. He cried, "I thirst," that He might be delivered from these distractions, that He might die at His best. Not that this was the only religious reason. Perhaps He also testified of His thirst to show His sympathy in our sufferings; that we may have the comfort of knowing that in all our afflictions He was afflicted; that He hungered and thirsted and suffered as we do; that He is no Stoic, but a brother who has trod the path of pain and death and knows all the ills that flesh is heir to. He is touched with compassion for our infirmities, for He has experienced them.

3. And here let us recollect that He was hungry as well as thirsty; no morsel had passed His lips since the Last Supper: He would therefore be overwhelmed with exhaustion. You remember the question once asked at Jacob's well: "Hath any man given him aught to eat?" Alas, no: who was now to do it? The disciples could not and His enemies would not. So we may say of Him, in the words of the psalmist, "Hungry and thirsty, His soul fainted in Him"; nay, we may recall His own words, apparently spoken but a few days before, "I was a hungered and ye gave Me no meat." His only meat, all through those terrible hours, was to do the will of GOD and to finish His work.

4. One other thought! This Man of many sorrows hungers and thirsts still; He thirsts for the salvation of mankind; He hungers and thirsts after righteousness —*our* righteousness. For He did not cease to love us, or to long for us, when the breath left His body: His compassionate heart has undergone no change since His exaltation to the skies: He is "the same yesterday, to-day and for ever." It has been truly said that "the desire of all nations" is now "the Desirer of all nations"; He has a divine thirst which we alone can slake, for when He sees of the travail of His soul, then He is *satisfied;* it is out of the wells of

salvation that He draws water. It is not only by giving to His disciples, giving them "a cup of cold water," that we give Him to drink; He desires not ours, but us. He who bade men come unto Him and drink, now draws them to His cross and shows them *His* thirst and says that they can assuage it. He thirsts to give us living water.[1]

Before we pass to the next word it may not be superfluous to remark that the darkness must by this time have lifted, partially, if not entirely. One could hardly have run and filled a sponge with vinegar in the dark, nor could others have seen this done. So that, at His eventide it was light. The Light of the World, it would seem, after all, died in the light of day.

And it was in the comfort of the light, and in the refreshment which the vinegar had afforded Him, that He now cries out again and cries forthwith and with a loud voice.[2] But what was that loud cry? What was the sixth word? Or (what is the same thing) which was His last word?

If we had only St. John's memoir to go by, we should say there can be no doubt on the point. These are his words, and they seem conclusive, "When JESUS, therefore had received the vinegar, He said,

[1] St. John iv. 10 [2] St. Mark xv. 37; St. Matt. xxvii. 50.

'It is finished,' and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit."

Yes, but St. Luke is equally emphatic. His account is that JESUS said, "'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.' And having said this He gave up the ghost." Do you say that there is a discrepancy between the two Evangelists? If there were, it would disappear at once on combining their accounts. Take the two together, and we learn that our SAVIOUR'S last word was this—

"IT IS FINISHED: FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT."

But, perhaps, you object that, according to this interpretation, there were only six words spoken from the cross instead of seven. Well, if that were so, the objection would not be a weighty one. For it is only customary, it is not scriptural, to speak of *seven* crucifixion cries. But the number is not affected: the four Evangelists do give seven sentences. And seven they remain, even though the seventh followed immediately upon the sixth. Nobody supposes that there was any considerable interval between the two—a few seconds at most! Why may we not suppose that there was no interval: that having said in a loud voice, "It is finished," He *straightway* added, in

an undertone, "Father, to Thee I commend My spirit"?

And if you say that this supposition involves us in another and greater difficulty, the difficulty of believing that each Evangelist only records one half of CHRIST'S last cry, I reply by asking, Why then does each Evangelist omit one of the last two words, when the seventh followed but a few moments after the sixth? That is just as great a difficulty as the other.

But I incline to think that some explanation can be given of this problem. I suggest to you—of course, it is only a suggestion—that the two words were in two different languages: the former in Greek and the second in Aramaic. I will not weary you with the reasons for this belief: I will merely say that some reasons there are.[1] And if this was so, you will see how the different sentences would fix the attention of different hearers: the women, for example, who were St. Luke's

[1] Our LORD'S addresses to the Father, especially when taken from the Psalms, would naturally be in the sacred and ancestral tongue. This disposes of the first, fourth and seventh words. So would His promise to the dying thief and His provision for the Virgin Mary: these were, so to speak, private communications. But the two remaining words—they were literally "words," one in each case, *Dipso*, *Tetelestai*—would perhaps be more effective, more likely to attain their object if spoken in Greek.

informants, would catch the latter, would fasten on it; St. John, whose Gospel is a "theology," would be arrested by the former. And what confirms me in the belief that these two cries must be joined together in one is that the latter is the supplement of the other; they fit into each other; they dovetail. The former refers to the past, the latter to the future. It is as if He had said, "My work is now accomplished; the time of My departure is come; I commend My departing spirit to the Father." So the last word marks the transition from one era to another.

But all this is of secondary importance. What we are concerned with is the meaning and the lessons of the words. And they are the same in any case.

"IT IS FINISHED." What was finished?

1. In the first place, His life upon earth, among human beings, was ended. I do not mean that there was any break in His humanity, for the manhood which He took from His mother He retains and will retain for ever. But the Man CHRIST JESUS is gone from us; those who knew Him after the flesh will henceforward know Him no more. His hungering and thirsting, His suffering and weeping, His healing and teaching are over. He has finished His course. The Son of Man He is still, with a human body, but that body disappears from view; it passes to its

appointed place. He finishes His life, as we do ours, in the grave and gate of death.

2. And with His life His temporal mission ended too. The august example, which was the first of His gifts to mankind: the incomparable teaching, which was the second; they are both, so far as His visible presence is concerned, at an end. For thirty-three years He had given an object-lesson unto men; for three years He had given oral instruction; object-lesson and oral lesson are alike finished—finished on the platform and in the pulpit of the cross.

3. And that beautiful life, of unsullied purity, of tender charity, of unwearying beneficence, it has also been a life of suffering and of shame. "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; "despised and rejected of men"; hunted and harried by scribe and Pharisee; enduring "the contradiction of sinners against Himself"—such has been His course. And that, too, that pilgrimage of pain, mental and bodily, is finished; He had consummated it upon the cross.

4. But was there nothing more? Is He merely Exemplar and Instructor? Is He not also a sacrifice for sin? The apostles regarded Him as such, as the propitiation for the world's sins. GOD did not come amongst us, did not take our flesh, merely to afford us an example of patience; He has given His life "as

a *ransom*"; He has "made peace by the blood of His cross." The atonement, the reconciliation—that was finished too. He has "obtained eternal salvation for us." "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

But let us not make a mistake here. Neither His love for us, nor His labour for us, has come to an end, or ever experiences any intermission. There is a phrase current amongst us which is very calculated to mislead: people speak of CHRIST'S "finished work," and they say that it was finished on the cross. And there is an element of truth in such language: otherwise it could hardly have held its ground as it has done. *One* part of CHRIST'S redeeming work was finished, as I have just contended, but not all His work: is He not labouring for us still? True, He has "entered into His rest," but His rest is like that of the blessed ones who "rest not day and night"; "the want of occupation is not rest." He no sooner gave up His spirit than "He went and preached to the spirits in prison."[1] Then, on the third day, He reappeared amongst men and gave commandment unto the apostles.[2] Then He went to prepare a place for us, yes, and to appear for us, to appear in

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 19. [2] Acts i. 2.

the presence of GOD. For the body that was crucified, He has carried it, as a part of Himself, carried it up on high, and there it rests, year in, year out, before the throne of the Eternal, bearing the marks of His Passion, and in it He ever liveth to make intercession for us; He shows the wounds, the pledges of His death; the sacrifice that was once offered is perpetually pleaded.

"It is finished." Aye, and at what a cost, and with what inconceivable love! That He may be our SAVIOUR, it has involved Him in this suffering and shame. But already He begins to taste His triumph. "For the joy that was set before Him," He has "endured the cross, despising the shame"; already He "remembereth no more the anguish," because of the sons that He will bring to glory.

But one thing still remains for Him to do. He is about to "yield up His spirit"; He will entrust it to GOD'S keeping: as it leaves the body it shall pass into the Father's custody. So He adds—and again He borrows His words from the Hebrew Psalter—

"FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT."

1. "Father." So we see—this is the first thought which this last "word" suggests—we see that He has recovered the Father.

You remember how He had ever insisted on the Fatherhood of GOD; how He had "showed men the Father"; how He had but lately said, "I am not alone, for the Father is with Me." And then we saw Him bereft of His Father's presence: He cries that GOD has forsaken Him. But now He possesses His Father again: now is fulfilled that word, "I go unto the Father," for it is into the Father's strong and loving hands that He resigns His departing soul. The seven words began with the Fatherhood and they end with it.

And has this no message for us? Can we ever forget that His Father is also our Father, as well as His GOD our GOD? Alas, we have forgotten! It is a strange thing that for centuries, so efficacious are the crafts of the devil, the gospel of the Fatherhood almost disappeared from the Church's teaching; men were positively afraid to trust to it; it seemed too good to be true. It should have been their stay and comfort in life and in death; it should have stood first in their soul's creed, for the gospel of the Father is just as precious, just as necessary, as the gospel of the Son; nay, the gospel of redemption springs out of it and rests upon it, and yet it became a dead letter—a dead letter, though the Only-begotten of the Father had revealed or reaffirmed it; He had steadfastly proclaimed it all through His ministry; He

proclaims it again with His dying breath; it is His last sweet legacy to the sons of men. Oh, happy are those who know that the Immortal GOD is their Father—their very Father, from Whom and in Whom they have their being, and who can rest in His love; happy are these who, as they depart this life, can commit their souls into a Father's keeping.

2. And here is a second lesson—that the spirit survives the shock of death: so He who has "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light" has taught us in this last of His crucifixion cries. We shall not altogether die, for CHRIST did not. The racked and excruciated body drooped and died, but the spirit, the immaterial part, was still in being and never more alert than then. "Put to death," as St. Peter says,[1] "in the flesh, He was quickened in the spirit." So that what we call "death" may really be a bursting into life.

> "Is that a deathbed where the Christian lies?
> Yes, but not his: 'tis death itself there dies!"

3. And this spirit of ours, this part of us which survives, which lives through the article of death, what becomes of it? Why, the Father's hands receive it. It may, indeed, be "carried by the angels into

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 18.

Abraham's bosom," for GOD works by means, and angels are among His messengers, but even so, they are but the hands, the organs of the Almighty. It is He that holds us and not they. "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of GOD, and no torment can touch them." Do not say that GOD has no hands, for He is a Spirit and has "neither body, parts nor passions." That is true, but He has what answers to our hands. Our hands hold, sustain, protect, cover. In this sense the Eternal is all hands; He holds us keeps us, defends us, encloses us; whatever kindly office our poor hands can discharge, that His omnipotence does and transcends a million times. Yes, and He holds our loved ones, when our grasp cannot; they pass out of our desolate hands into His. They die in our arms and we break out into lamentations. Oh, shortsighted that we are, when underneath them and about them are "the everlasting arms!"

4. Yes, and those hands of GOD are ever near. The spirit, as it leaves the flesh, has not to travel far to find them; as in life, so in death, "Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet." "GOD encompasseth us"; He is everywhere; He waits at our dying lips. The Jews had a pretty conceit, that the angel of death drew out the departing soul with a kiss. Nay, it is GOD'S own kisses that are

on our brow when we, like our SAVIOUR, "give up the ghost."

> "Faint not nor fear: *His arms are near,*
> He changeth not, and thou art dear!"

5. And here is a last thought—not the last that is in the words, for we can never exhaust their meaning, but the last that I can discover for you now—CHRIST teaches us to commit our dying souls to GOD. He is our example in death as in life, and if our last end is to be like His, then we must commend our souls, as they pass away, to GOD who gave them. Or, if *we* cannot do it, by reason of the pains of death, then others may discharge that office for us. We have a prayer to this effect in our Office for the Visitation of the Sick, but I fear that it is but seldom used. You sometimes read in obituary notices that so and so passed away "fortified by the rites of the Church"—they mean extreme unction by the words. The man CHRIST JESUS, the Church's Head, had no such *viaticum*, but He had His commendatory prayer, and we cannot need that less than He did.

And no sooner did the prayer pass His lips than He yielded up that spirit of which He had just spoken. He "bowed His head and gave up His spirit." Oh, how well they remembered that moment in after years, those who, like St. John and the faithful

women, had seen the blessed head of Him whom they loved fall suddenly forward: I suspect they stammered out, one to the other, beneath their breath, "He is dead!" While there is life, there is hope, and they were so conscious of His power that they may have hoped, even to the end, that He would come out of His ordeal triumphant. But with His death came despair and desolation and confusion; they would not know what to make of it: they were as men that dream: their thoughts would "lie too deep for tears." Oh that such a life and such goodness and such wisdom should have ended thus! Oh the cruel, shameful, horrible tragedy! And the mystery of it all! You may picture to yourselves their bewilderment as they saw their LORD and MASTER hanging lifeless on the cross. For they were Jews, and they would hardly fail to recall the sentence, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."

But how different does this martyrdom appear to us, who stand beneath the cross to-day and view His dead body in the light of His Incarnation and Resurrection. They thought only of death; we of "life from the dead"! And I will conclude these addresses, this representation of "the LORD'S death," by asking you to consider its meaning and its lessons for us now, nearly nineteen centuries after the event.

Nineteen centuries! Ah, is it not significant that after this long lapse of time, Christendom should still celebrate that event, should gather round the cross from year to year, as we have just done. Think of it, brothers and sisters of the Church! There is nothing under the sun that is so revered, so commemorated, as this cruel, brutal, bitter death. There has not been a Sunday, perhaps there has not been a day, for all these years since the Ascension, when that death has not been "showed." Among all the changes and chances of this mortal life the crucifixion has remained the dominant fact of the world's history; that cross of shame towers high above thrones and powers and dominions. And why is this? Why have human hearts gone out in such yearning love to One who perished thus, One who died the accursed death?

1. Because He laid down His life *of Himself.* It was not that He was helpless. His "life was taken away from the earth," but not because men forced it from Him or ground it out of Him—as He told us Himself—He gave it up of His own accord; it was His own surrender. "He yielded up His spirit." They only "killed the Prince of Life," because He laid His life down: He had power to lay it down, just as He had power to take it again.

And this it was, you remember, that, according to

St. Mark (the words are not found, however, in some MSS.), so much impressed the centurion. That officer saw, from the loud voice with which our SAVIOUR cried, that His life was yet whole in Him. And when, the next moment, after *so* crying out, He gave up the ghost, then it was that this rude soldier recognized Him as some one superhuman, as "the Son of GOD."

And here you may trace the broad difference between this and other like martyrdoms: The martyrs died in the course of nature; their life was torn or burnt out of them. CHRIST'S life was an *oblation:* He "made His soul an offering for sin." This it is that invests it with such unique grandeur; it was an act of pure self-surrender. His enemies thought that they had slain Him; they could not do it. He came to their aid and "gave up His spirit." And so that death, so full of disgrace, has "crowned Him with glory and honour." He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." There you see "His Sacred Majesty." Our kings are celebrated for what they have acquired; our SAVIOUR is endeared to us for what He has suffered and surrendered.

And here I must quote to you the tribute of the rationalist Renan—perhaps all the more valuable because of his lax views. It is thus he contemplates the dead CHRIST: "Rest now," he cries, "in Thy glory,

noble initiator. Thy work is completed; Thy divinity is established. . . . For thousands of years the world will extol Thee. . . . A thousand times more living, a thousand times more loved since Thy death than during Thy pilgrimage here below, Thou wilt become to such a degree a corner-stone of humanity that to tear Thy name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations. . . . Complete conqueror of death, take possession of Thy kingdom, whither, by the royal road that Thou hast traced, ages of adorers will follow Thee."

I have said that our LORD laid down His life of Himself, but I must add—

2. That He laid it down in love for mankind. They said by the grave of Lazarus, "Behold, how He loved him." And shall we not exclaim, from our station by the cross, "Behold, how He loved *us*." Ah, that is why the CHRIST, "lifted up" on the tree of shame, draws all men unto Him; He draws them by the cords of His amazing charity. "Love begets love"; how much more such love as His; this it is that breaks us down and conquers us: "the love of CHRIST constraineth us." "We love Him because He first loved us."

And our profit by this contemplation of His Passion will be commensurate with the yearning and adoring

and constraining love which the sight of our King, "in His solitudes and sufferings," begets in our hearts. For this is His guerdon, this His only recompense—our love. That He does desire and hunger for; He "stoops to ask of us, The love of our poor hearts." And that is all that He craves, for duty, devotion and the rest follow in its train. And O, how distressing is the thought that His infinite grace and goodness so often goes unrequited; it is "nothing to them that pass by"; they go, one to his farm and another to his merchandise, whilst the King of Love gasps out His life for them. How terrible it is to think of, if this CHRIST is what He claimed to be, GOD manifest in the flesh; it is more than ingratitude: it is deadly sin. To contemn His cross is to seal our doom. So at least St. Paul judged: "If any man," he cried, "love not our LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be anathema." You cannot suppose that the gentle apostle who was content, as he tells us, to be anathema himself for the sake of his brethren and kinsmen—you cannot suppose that he went out of his way to fulminate curses against others; no, he only pronounces this anathema upon them because the Almighty Love will in any case inflict it. "GOD is love," but He has no place in His palace for those who have no love for the Son of His love, Who has

loved us and given Himself for us. And now we reach another thought—

3. That all this suffering and all this shame was endured for sinners. And in two ways: First, "while we were yet sinners, CHRIST died for us." It was not for friends or for good men that He bore it all, it was for enemies, for rebels; and it is this feature that distinguishes His love: herein lies its nobility. You know the words: they are better than any that I can use—

> "Thou, O my JESUS, Thou didst me
> Upon the cross embrace,
> For me didst bear the nails and spear
> And manifold disgrace.
> And griefs and torments numberless
> And sweat of agony;
> Yea, death itself, and all for me
> Who was Thine enemy."

The crowning glory of CHRIST'S death is that it was for His foes. But it was for sinners, secondly, to save them from their sins. He has made our peace by the blood of His cross. He has reconciled us to the Father. He has "obtained eternal redemption for us." And this brings me to another lesson of the cross.

4. "Did CHRIST die and shall sin live?" So asks the Puritan Dr. John Owen. It was sin that caused

Him all this agony: shall we by our sins "crucify Him afresh"? For this is what sin does, as the Scripture tells us; it rehearses all the shameful tragedy over again. Why, the Jews would hardly have crucified Him a second time: that cruelty is reserved for Christians who sin wilfully; our impurities, our dishonesties, drive the nails into the quivering flesh once more. Sorrow for sin and a horror of sin, these must be the fruits of our meditations if they are to be of any permanent use. Of what profit is it that we know all about the crucifixion, that we comprehend its details and realize all its horrors, if we frustrate its blessed purpose? Then has CHRIST died in vain; alike the solitudes and the sufferings of His Divine Majesty are made of none effect. He has led the way that we may follow in His footsteps: that the old sinful Adam within us may be crucified with Him, that we should no more serve sin. We were baptized *into His death* that we may rise to newness of life. Practical resolve—not mere passive emotion—that should be the fruit of this course: the imitation of CHRIST, the pursuit of purity. That is the test. When Aeschines had spoken, the people would extol his oratory, but when Demosthenes had addressed them they had but one thought, "Let us go and fight Philip." Let us go and fight sin! And this has been

finely expressed in lines with which, perhaps, these meditations may fittingly conclude—

"Three pilgrims from the Holy Land!
  Three sparkling scallop shells they bore;
And as the good ship touched the strand,
  They crossed themselves and sprang ashore.

Thank GOD for creed, for mass, for song,
  For all the wonders they had seen:
The bright, blue Lake of Galilee,
  The glories of Mount Tabor green.

They'd kissed the Holy Sepulchre,
  And prayed in sad Gethsemane,
And one brought back a soft green bough
  Pluckt from the SAVIOUR'S olive tree.

And one brought back a milk-white stone
  Whereon they say He once did lie,
And one brought back—*a broken heart*
  For all the sins that made Him die."

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